

disease would be the deathblow to power. Mr. Paterson put on the blackboard a copy of the sphere of Pythagoras, who lived in the sixth century; he explained its readings and said that even the great Galen, a Greek physician of the first century, became a convert to magical cures. The material hypothesis, as to the cause of disease, started the great dialectic struggle between theism and materialism, which continues to the present day, and we might still with profit read the words of Pliny (also of the first century), "How many discoveries are reserved for the ages when our memories shall be no more, for this world contains matter for investigation for all generations. On entering a temple we show all signs of reverence. How much more reverent then should we be before the heavenly bodies, the stars, the very nature of God!"

In the late pre-Christian era, Greek medicine degenerated and science was neglected. The early Christian church forbade the practice of heathen magic, but introduced a magic of its own. Most Christian communities had an exorcist or official caster-out of devils. In 376 B.C. the Council of Laodicea ordained that only those should practise the necessary rites who were authorised to by the bishops. Under the Roman Emperors, magicians flourished but it is interesting to note that we owe the idea of a public hospital to the Romans—there was an Æsculapean temple on an island on the Tiber to which sick slaves were sent by the masters. The Emperor Claudius enacted that all slaves who had been patients there should be free men on their departure. With the fall of the Empire in the fifth century, rational medicine ceased to exist and the "Church sleep" was revived again after three centuries. Mr. Paterson next told of some cures put on record in this connection. In the Middle Ages, the long journeys, undertaken for purposes of cure, were obviated by the use of relics, objects which, by some means, had come into contact with the saints; even a scrap of silk, left for a night on the tomb of a saint, was supposed to have curative qualities.

The rational medicine of the Greeks was, however, not dead, for during the period of decay in Europe the torch of science was kept burning in Arabia for several centuries. There was a notable advance in scientific and medical knowledge there, and Arabic medicine was introduced into Europe by the Crusaders returning from Palestine in the 13th and 14th centuries; but it was not until the sixteenth that the principles taught by Hippocrates began to receive recognition. The scientific spirit was reborn and medicine freed from priestly control.

One of the longest-lived superstitions of the Middle Ages was "touching" for King's evil, and it was continued from the days of the Confessor until the time of Queen Anne.

The lecturer gave some examples of how the practice of medicine is modified in different countries according to the religious beliefs or those in magic held by the peoples. Next followed some adverse criticisms on Christian Science and also on Osteopathy. Mr. Paterson went on to say that the public do not realise that medicine is an art and not an exact science. They are aware of the limitations of the healing art, but do not realise how great has been the conquest of disease. Hence any quack who claims to achieve something outside the knowledge of the medical man is sure of a vociferous, if transient, following. A quack at a fair near Paris was doing a lucrative business in selling nostrums and professing to cure various diseases. So successful was he that at last the police were compelled to interfere, and they asked him to produce his licence to practise medicine. To the amazement of the officers of the law, he produced a genuine certificate that he was the possessor of the degree of Doctor of Medicine of Paris. The gendarmes apologised, but the Doctor cut them short with an urgent entreaty that they should say nothing of the matter. "For," said he, "if people know that I am a qualified doctor, I shall have no customers." Mr.

Paterson then humorously told of an incident which happened to himself in the Highlands, when he, with another surgeon and a physician, visited the house of a man who had injured his ankle. They bound up the wounded ankle, but soon the patient was informed by someone else that a red herring would work an almost immediate cure. The herring was produced from a town six miles off, it was bandaged on to the ankle and the patient got up, with results that hindered his cure for months.

The study of the past, concluded the lecturer, is always profitable. We are so obsessed by the hypothesis of evolution that we are apt to overlook the fact of degeneration. At times the gold has been replaced by dross. The time is not far behind us when consumptives were kept in rooms almost hermetically sealed, as if pure air and oxygen were only fit for the healthy. Yet centuries ago, Æsculapius taught the value of cleanliness and fresh air. We have seen that in the ages of the remote past, medicine was associated with magic, based on superstition and often on fraud. Is it not true that, thousands of years later, magic still plays a part in the doctor's work? To our ancestors the results achieved in our time by the art of healing would appear magical if not miraculous. The doctor no longer practises magic, but the true physician, by his sympathy, by his personality and his understanding, casts on those who seek his aid a spell of magic which adds a mighty potency to the means, be they medical or surgical, used in the treatment of the sick. Magic and mystery—life is a Mystery and the art which cares for this Mystery is shadowed by its twin sister Magic.

BENEVOLENCE.

For the space of an hour before one of the lectures, recently held at Headquarters, we had a little "Bring and Buy Sale." The kindness of many of the London Members, in connection with this small effort, has resulted in the sum of £13 15s. for the Helena Benevolent Fund.

The Whist Drive which we arranged for March 25th resulted in close upon £5 for the Benevolent Fund, and this month's "good deed" has been undertaken by Cook, who has promised to make as many cakes as the nurses care to order.

OBITUARY.

Miss Agnes Bousfield.

It was with very deep regret that we received recently intimation of the death of Miss Agnes Bousfield, who joined the Association not many years after its formation. For years she took a keen interest in its activities and was most generous and kind to its Benevolent Funds in particular. In addition to a certificate of General Training from the Royal Infirmary, Leicester, she held one in massage and was a certified midwife. She died after a somewhat prolonged illness, but letters recently received from her indicated that she still retained her interest in all matters relating to her profession.

BLUEBELL RAMBLE.

The first of our country Rambles will take place on Tuesday, May 3rd. The charabanc will leave the Club at 9.30 a.m., and follow the river through Staines, Windsor, Maidenhead and Henley to Watlington, taking a different route back. We shall have a picnic lunch on the way, and after a ramble through the beautiful bluebell woods near Watlington, we are invited to tea in the hospital garden there. We shall return in the evening through High Wycombe and Beaconsfield. The ticket for the Ramble will be 6s. 6d., and it is essential that those who wish to join in it shall give the Secretary due notice beforehand.

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ISABEL MACDONALD,
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