

Nova et Vetera

"ISIS"

Isis, which is the quarterly organ of the History of Science Society and of the International Academy of the History of Science, contains in its March number¹ four articles that are of medical interest. The first, dealing with the discovery of x rays, is from the pen of George Sarton, D.Sc., founder and editor of the journal. He introduces the subject with a short but clear summary of the progress of electrical knowledge towards the creation of a vacuum. He then gives a biography of Wilhelm Konrad Röntgen, who was born in 1845, discovered the x rays on November 8, 1895, whilst he was professor of physics at Würzburg, and died at Munich in 1923. The article ends with a facsimile reproduction of Röntgen's first account of his discovery. This appeared in the *Sitzungsberichte der Physikalisch-medizinische Gesellschaft of Würzburg* on December 28, 1895, which was distributed to the members early in January, 1896. It attracted attention immediately, for *Nature* published a translation on January 23, 1896, the *Electrician* on January 24, and *Science* on February 14 in the same year.

Dr. Aydin M. Sayili of Harvard University writes on Uygur medicine, which was pre-Islamic. The climax of the political and military powers of the Uygurs—a Turkish-speaking people of Central Asia—was in the eighth century of the Christian era. His study shows that the Uygurs possessed a sound and well-defined medical knowledge which appears to have been slightly in advance of Saxon medicine of the same period. The system was secular and was free from spiritual, magical, and religious elements. He then proceeds to consider Turkish medicine in the Moslem world, and shows how much still remains to be done in connexion with its history. His paper is especially valuable, for it proves that Turkish doctors are beginning to show an interest in the history of their profession. The Institute of the History of Medicine was founded in 1933, and was at once affiliated to the Istanbul University.

The article written by Lieut.-Colonel E. E. Hume tells the story of the inception and growth of the Army Medical Library at Washington, U.S.A. It is illustrated with excellent portraits of John Shaw Billings and Fielding H. Garrison—household words to all who use the *Index Catalogue*. Colonel Hume, like all librarians, wants more room. He points out incidentally that about one-thirtieth of the world's literature is medical, and draws attention to the fact that the books in special libraries are much more often consulted than when they form part of a general collection.

Miss Kate C. H. Mead contributes an article on the medicine of the Lapps, and there is an appreciative review by Miss Mary Catherine Welborn of the book on John Mirfeld recently written by Sir P. Horton-Smith Hartley and Mr. H. R. Aldridge. The whole number is interesting, and the printing and format do credit to the Saint Catherine Press, Ltd., of Tempelhof, Bruges, by whom it is printed in Belgium.

OLD MEDICAL BOOKS

A few old medical books have appeared recently in the London book market. On April 12 and following days Messrs. Sotheby's auction catalogue included Gabriel Fallopius' on *Ulcers and Tumours*, Venice, 1563; Galen's works, edited by L. Fuchsius, Paris, about 1550; Cardanus, *Commentaries on Hippocrates*, Basle, 1564; Miles Coverdale, a most excellent and perfect "homish apothecarye

or homely physick booke for all the grefes and diseases of the bodye," Cologne, 1561. In the sale on April 26 there were sold in several lots 199 letters by Dominique Jean Larrey (1766–1842), surgeon-in-chief of Napoleon's Armies, written during the various campaigns from 1798 to Waterloo; they deal with all kinds of medical as well as military affairs. Of medical interest, if not a medical book, in the same sale is a copy of the first edition of *Pantagruel*, Paris, 1546, by "M. Franc. Rabelais, docteur en médecine." There are thought to be at most two other copies in existence, and possibly only one.

Reports of Societies

OTITIS MEDIA IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

At the meeting of the Section of Otology of the Royal Society of Medicine on May 7 the subject of discussion was otitis media in early childhood. The president, Dr. DOUGLAS GUTHRIE, said that this subject had been discussed by pathologists and paediatricians for many years, but appeared to have attracted only slight attention from otologists, possibly because the cases did not come under their supervision, being seen rather in general medical wards and at necropsy. The problem was whether the infection of the middle ear which was so extremely common in infants suffering from any disease whatsoever was a primary condition or a secondary phenomenon of comparatively slight importance. The council of the Section, in endeavouring to secure the views of otologists, found that very few had paid much attention to the problem, and to secure material for discussion, which was to have been limited to otitis in infants, the subject was extended to children up to the age of 5.

French and English Experience

Dr. LE MÉE of Paris opened the discussion with a few remarks on his experience of otitis in children under 15 months. He showed some excellent coloured slides of the normal and pathological tympanic membrane in infants, and drew particular attention to what he called the frosted tympanic membrane dotted over with little grains. He said that this appearance was very often found in infants, and was quite characteristic. There was such a condition as a latent otitis in which the external symptoms were only general or systemic. This type of otitis must be suspected whenever there was a febrile condition without evident cause. A very important symptom was a certain localized convulsion, especially ocular. On making an incision of a suspected tympanic membrane pus was not always found, but it might appear later. It was well to remember that otitis media meant an infection of the whole of the middle-ear tract—mastoid, antrum, middle ear, and tube. There was no barrier dividing the tympanum from the mastoid.

His indication for myringotomy was one sleepless night. If the child had one sleepless night with ear trouble he operated next day. Dr. Le Mée proceeded to describe his method of operation in mastoid cases. He always carried out this operation in infants in two stages, incising the periosteum, and, one or two days later, removing the bone. A few years ago he was impressed by the number of cases in which a very high fever had followed the carrying out of the operation in one stage. Since operating in two stages such complications had not occurred. Surgery in the infant must be minimal.

Analysis of Cases

Dr. T. RITCHIE RODGER gave an analysis of all cases of acute otitis media seen in children under 3 years of age

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