

THE OSLER CLUB OF LONDON

THE Annual General Meeting of the Osler Club of London was held at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine on Thursday 11 June 1970. The reports of the Secretary and Treasurer for the preceding year were presented and the Council for the 1970/71 session elected, including Dr. D. Geraint James as President and Dr. John Cule as Secretary. Following an excellent buffet supper the following short communications were presented:

Firstly, 'That Picture' by Dr. Norah Schuster. The picture in question is of Alexander, Emperor of the Russias, painted by James Northcote in 1820 which now hangs in the Royal Society of Medicine in London. It depicts the Emperor resuscitating a peasant who had just been pulled from the river, supposedly drowned. Though his companion, Dr. James Wylie, had pronounced the man dead, the Emperor continued in his efforts which were rewarded when the man recovered. For this deed Alexander was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Humane Society.

Next Lord Platt talked about the new College of Physicians. He began by tracing the early history of the College and then went on to describe in some detail the events that led up to the building of the present College in Regent's Park. He gave an amusing account of the negotiations with the Honourable George Drew, High Commissioner for Canada about the surrender of the lease on the old College so that Canada House could occupy it. The design of the new College and the talent of the architect, Denys Lasdun, were discussed.

The third speaker was Professor C. C. Booth who gave a fascinating account of the life and works of John Dawson. This remarkable man worked as a country practitioner in the Yorkshire dales near Sedberg. He was better known, however, for his mathematical ability, and pupils came from far and wide to study under him. A self-taught man, he was one of a group of outstanding practitioners who came from this area in the eighteenth century.

Dr. T. D. Whittet then gave an account of John Badger, the Apothecarite. The main point of interest here was, perhaps, that it gave a good insight into the rivalry that existed between the Royal College of Physicians and the Society of Apothecaries in those days. Finally, Dr. John Ross recounted something about the author, Thomas Nash and his novelette *The Unfortunate Traveller*. This book contained some interesting medical references, including one to the 'sweating sickness'. This was epidemic in Europe in the sixteenth century and its aetiology remains obscure, though it may well have been due to a virus.

The Osler Club of London is a medical history society based on London. Though primarily founded to commemorate Sir William Osler, a number of other topics of medical and historical interest, not directly related to Osler, are presented at meetings. There are usually about nine meetings a year. New members are welcome and further details can be obtained from: Dr. John Cule, Honorary Secretary, c/o The Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London, N.W.1.