

Nova et Vetera

THE KNIGHTS HOSPITALLERS

Medical Work of the Knights Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem. By Edgar Erskine Hume, Lieutenant-Colonel, Medical Corps, United States Army. (Pp. 371; illustrated. \$3.00.) Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press. 1940.

The Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem began about the year 1165 to protect the sick and needy Crusaders—*hospitalitas*, as it was then called. Times were rough but chivalrous, and what began as a civil organization soon became a powerful military Order. Colonel Hume of the United States Army Medical Corps traces its history through the many changes it has undergone during the centuries, and claims correctly that it is the first time the whole story has been told in English.

From the Holy Land the Order migrated to Acre, from Acre to Cyprus, from Cyprus to Rhodes, and from Rhodes to Malta. Its members are still active and carry out the objects for which the Order was founded. Catholic it began, and under the Catholic Church it remains. Little, therefore, is heard of it in Protestant countries, but its sphere of influence has widened and the principles it inculcated are now world-wide.

The attention of Colonel Hume seems to have been first called to the Order when he was acting as Commissioner of the American Red Cross in the Balkan States during the war of 1914-18. He became interested in the Order, and in 1937 was a delegate from the United States to the ninth Congress, which was held at Bucarest. He speaks, therefore, with authority; and, being a skilled linguist, has produced a standard work. It will be referred to by several different classes of readers. The historian will consult it for many facts useful in telling the story of the sick poor. Medical officers of the Navy and Army attached to the garrison at Malta will read with renewed interest of the magnificent buildings which are still in use: of the castle of Sant Angelo in the Grand Harbour; of La Valetta and L'Isle Adams's fortifications which to-day are withstanding the bomber; of the Auberges of the different Langues; of the Armoury and of the fine church of St. John. Many members of the Services pass them on their way to the club and the opera house, but too often with eyes that see not. Those of the English Order of St. John will read the book, and it is of equal interest for members of the Red Cross.

Colonel Hume has illustrated his book well, and has been especially honoured in being allowed to photograph for the first time the hand of St. John the Baptist, the most precious relic in the Royal Chapel at Belgrade. He has also obtained a photograph of the Ossuary chapel at Valletta, to which it is usually most difficult to gain admission. It may be stated for his information that Sir G. T. Beatson gives better and more modern illustrations of the Priory of Torphichen than Colonel Hume has been able to obtain. They appeared in *The Knights Hospitallers in Scotland and their Priory at Torphichen*. The little account was published at Glasgow in 1903 by James Hedderwick and Sons at the Citizen Offices.

D'A. P.

AZTEC MEDICINE

Englishmen know very little about Mexican medicine in pre-Columbian times except for Monardés's *Joyful News of the New Found World*, of which an edition appeared in 1925 under the supervision of Sir Stephen Gaselee. Miss Emily Walcott Emmart, therefore, has done good service by publishing with an English translation a facsimile of the Badianus manuscript now in the Vatican Library.¹ The volume appears in as sumptuous a form as it is complete—a large quarto with 118 plates in colour and an elaborate textual

¹ *The Badianus Manuscript* (Codex Barberini, Latin 241), Vatican Library. An Aztec Herbal of 1552. Introduction, translation and annotations by Emily Walcott Emmart. With a foreword by Henry E. Sigerist. Pp. 341; 53s. 6d. net.) Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press. 1940.

apparatus of notes, commentaries, and indexes. It is difficult to allot the greater praise to Miss Emmart for her learning and accuracy, to the Johns Hopkins Press for the mechanical production, or to the public spirit which has provided the money. It makes one very envious to read of the help given by the Smithsonian Institute, the Herb Society of America, and the Garden Club of America, for it shows that the people of the United States are far in advance of ourselves in the furtherance of such an enterprise.

The manuscript, which is headed "A Little Book on Indian Medical Herbs," was written in 1552 on loose pages in Aztec by Martin, a native teacher of the language in the College of the Holy Cross at Santiago. It was translated into Latin by John Badianus, who taught Latin there, and was dedicated to Francis Mendoza, son of the first Viceroy of Mexico. There is an abridged Italian copy in the Royal Library at Windsor. The manuscript throws a vivid light on the policy pursued by the Emperor Charles V in dealing with the vast population which had come under his control in the New World. An educational system was soon provided to teach the people to read and write in Spanish, and about 1530 the College of the Holy Cross was founded at Santiago, where the more promising boys learnt the humanities, music, medicine, and, no doubt, theology from specially appointed teachers.

As regards medicine, women as well as men were allowed to occupy themselves with the cure of disease. The grades were well defined, but there is no mention of specialism. The physician was accompanied in his visit to the patient by a sorcerer, but charms were not much used; the surgeon attended to injuries, undertook massage, employed stiff casings to bones and joints, and dealt with the bleedings which formed an integral part of the therapeutic system; the midwife appears to have given advice to the mother before and after childbirth. The remedies employed were largely herbal, and the coloured plates show that the doctrine of signatures took some part in their selection. Lotions, tinctures, plasters, and pastes were largely used.

The complaints treated were numerous: lice, scabies, and impetigo were rampant, borborygmi were common, associated perhaps with the vegetable diet; stinking axillae were offensive, and there are many remedies which are as much wanted now as when the manuscript was written. There are prescriptions for "loss and interruption of sleep," "the cure of drowsiness," and "for the fatigue of those administering the government and holding public office."

D'A. P.

MEDICAL EDUCATION UNDER AIR-RAID CONDITIONS

POSITION OF THE LONDON SCHOOLS

Never in their history have the London medical schools faced such a situation as now presents itself. Last year the students were dispersed among various hospitals in the respective sectors, but this year it had been hoped to resume more normal working. The intensive bombardment of London, however, during the month preceding the opening of the winter session, and the damage done to a number of teaching hospitals, has led to rapid changes of programme.

The dean of Westminster Hospital Medical School, for example, states that a month ago he was optimistic regarding the arrangements, but the happenings of recent weeks have altered the situation completely. The outstanding problems are the absence of clinical material at the hospital and the difficulty of supplying it at a distance from London. Similarly at Charing Cross, although fairly full courses have hitherto been carried on, the intensification of aerial warfare has resulted in a considerable falling off in the amount of clinical material available. In both these hospitals possibilities of overcoming the difficulty are being explored.