

THE NORWEGIAN SOCIETY
FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

THE Norwegian Society for the History of Medicine held its first meeting of the season on 21st September 1961, at 'Damms Bokhus'. The speaker was Edvard Gotfredsen, the Danish Professor of Medical History. In a fascinating talk Dr. Gotfredsen described the influence of Corvisart, Skoda, Auenbrugger and Laënnec on the development of Norwegian clinical medicine. The new diagnostic techniques were well received by a few enthusiastic Norwegian physicians—at least one of whom had studied auscultation under Laënnec for a whole day!—but somewhat less readily by their more conservative colleagues.

Dr. Gotfredsen also gave a lecture on the History of Blood Transfusion to the medical students of Oslo University. His visit stimulated great interest in medical history in Norway, which is one of the very few countries where this subject has no chair at either University.

BERNHARD GETZ

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECTION OF MEDICAL HISTORY
IN THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
(VICTORIAN BRANCH)

AT a meeting of the Section held on Monday, 5th July 1961, a paper entitled 'Medieval Arabian Medicine' was presented by Mr. Michael Young, Lecturer in Arabic, Department of Semitic Studies, University of Melbourne.

The Speaker divided Arabian Medicine into four main periods. The first was the Early Period extending from the time the Arabs overran North Africa and Western Asia until about A.D. 750. The second was the Age of Translation which extended from A.D. 750 to A.D. 900. During that period many translations of Greek medical works were made and a Translation Institute was established at Baghdad. The period between A.D. 900 and A.D. 1100 was the Golden Age of Arabian Medicine. During that period the separate spheres of the physician, surgeon, ophthalmologist and pharmacologist were demarcated for the first time. After A.D. 1100 Arabian Medicine entered a Period of Decline.

Among the major contributions of the Arabic peoples to medicine were the establishment of an efficient system of hospitals and the development of a system of clinical instruction in them. The Arabs were the first to have out-patient departments, the first to have pharmacies attached to hospitals and the first to institute a regular inspection of hospital finances and administration. They set a high standard of public hygiene even though they did not understand the nature of infectious diseases and one of the features of their system was the official inspection of physicians, surgeons, druggists and vendors of foodstuffs. They also developed a number of surgical instruments of which those designed for ophthalmological operations were among the most prominent.

M. L. VERSO