

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN: MEDICAL HISTORY CLUB

ON Wednesday, 16th April 1961, at an informal but enthusiastic meeting in the Medical Library, a club was founded for the 'study, discussion and propagation of medical history in Cape Town'. An interim steering committee was elected consisting of Dr. H. Gordon (convenor), Miss S. Katcher (secretary), Dr. A. P. Blignault and Dr. R. L. Kleinan.

To mark the 200th anniversary of the publication of Morgagni's *De Sedibus et Causis Morborum* . . ., an exhibition was arranged in the Medical Library to illustrate the development of textbooks of pathology. Original editions, facsimiles, photographs and morbid anatomical specimens were displayed to illustrate the works of Benivieni, Bonet, Morgagni, Rokitansky, Virchow, Aschoff, Muir and Anderson. By happy coincidence, Dr. W. A. D. Anderson of Miami was visiting this university as guest professor of pathology and the latest (1961) edition of his *Textbook of Pathology* arrived just in time to be included in the exhibition. At a ceremony on the 22nd September 1961, Dr. Anderson formally opened the exhibition and presented a short account of the development of pathology textbooks in North America.

The Medical History Club has prepared a small brochure containing biographical notes on the pathologists whose works were included in the exhibition.

HYMIE GORDON

News, Notes and Queries

A SIKH (SURGICAL) KIRPAN FROM THE INDIAN MUTINY

THERE has recently been presented to the museum of the Royal Army Medical Corps at Church Crookham, Aldershot, a Sikh fighting knife or Kirpan, which has a veritable 'surgeon's chest' ingeniously stored away in its handle. The design of the knife blade derives from Khyberian tradition, as is indicated by the strong rib to the blade; the instruments were obviously made by a 'daesi mistri' and the ornamentation is typically Punjabi. The accompanying photographs show clearly the compartment in the handle in which the instruments are packed away when not in use, as well as the number and variety of the instruments, which include lancets, surgical saw, forceps, etc.

The knife was picked up on the battlefield of Mooltan in 1857 by the servant of Surgeon Major Daniel Paterson Barry, who was born at Dundalk in 1825 and died at Tunbridge Wells in 1901, having served in the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. It presents an intriguing problem. The crudely made surgical instruments are unlikely to have been used by a British Army surgeon, but, at the same time, it is difficult to envisage a war-like Sikh making a savage onslaught on his enemy and then proceeding to unscrew the top of his weapon to patch him up again!

This interesting exhibit was presented by Mrs. M. Ryan of Okehampton, Devon, the widow of a grandson of Dr. Barry.

R. E. BARNESLEY