Efficient Surgical Science for the Whole Community:

Dr. Robert B. Greenough ........................................ 435

Some High Lights of Astronomy During the Past Year:
Dr. Harlow Shapley .............................................. 439

Obituary:
The Widow of Charles S. Peirce: Dr. Joseph Jastrow. Recent Deaths ........................................ 440

Scientific Events:
Historic Scientific Instruments; The Hall of Races of Mankind at the Field Columbian Museum; Grants in Aid of Research of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; Sigma Pi Sigma Convention; The Cleveland Meeting of the National Academy of Sciences ........................................ 442

Scientific Notes and News ........................................ 444

Discussion:
Geology and Archeology as Border Sciences: Dr. H. de Terra. Perforated Fiber-Tracheids in the Passion Flowers: Dr. E. H. Woodward. A Possible Relation of Vitamin E to Unrestricted Cell Division: Dr. F. B. Adamstone. The Chemical Transmission of Nerve Impulses: Sir Henry H. Dale ........................................ 447

Scientific Books:

Reports:
The New England Intercollegiate Geological Excursion: Professor Lloyd W. Fisher ........................................ 453

Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods:

Special Articles:
Transmission of Influenza by a Filterable Virus: Dr. Thomas Francis, Jr. Glutamine in the Tomato Plant: Dr. Hubert Bradford Vickery, Dr. George W. Pummer and Dr. Harold E. Clarke. Ovulation in the Domestic Hen: Professor D. C. Warren and Professor H. M. Scott ........................................ 457

Science Notes ................................................. 458

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EFFICIENT SURGICAL SERVICE FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

By Dr. Robert B. Greenough
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Under its broad charter the American College of Surgeons has brought about outstanding improvements in the practise of surgery in the twenty-two years of its existence. It has set up qualifications for fellowship to ensure that every fellow is in fact worthy and competent to practise his designated branch of the art of surgery. Through its hospital standardization department and its special committees, the quality of hospital service and of surgical service supplied to the community has been greatly improved.

Profound changes, however, have been taking place in our civilization in the past twenty years. The mechanical age, with its mass production methods and the unprecedented advances of science, have brought new problems in political economy and have forced us to discard many of our older methods and ideals and to seek new patterns on which to build our economic structure.

The medical profession, however, has resisted the attempt to extend mass-production principles to the practise of medicine. It is their belief that the peculiarly personal and fiduciary nature of the relation between physician and patient is too precious to be jeopardized by radical changes of a socialistic nature. The individual is dependent on his medical adviser for the maintenance of his health and functional efficiency. In the selection of the physician or the hospital in which he has confidence rests the first step in that relationship of trust which plays so great a part in medical practise; a trusteeship—which is safeguarded by the Hippocratic oath and the code of ethics of the medical profession.

In the past five years of depression and unemployment many of the community resources formerly available for the care of the indigent sick have broken

1 Abstract of inaugural address, Clinical Congress, American College of Surgeons, Boston, October 15, 1934.