

UNIVERSITY DEGREES CONFERRED

Degrees were conferred at a meeting of the Council and Senate of the University of Adelaide on Friday. The Chancellor, Sir George Murray, presided, and was supported by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir William Mitchell, and by the Warden of the Senate, Mr. Justice Angus Parsons. The following degrees were conferred:— Doctor of Medicine, Reginald Francis Matters, M.B., B.S.; Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, Harvey Herbert Hurst, Albert Elijah Gribble and Lindsay David Hodby; Bachelor of Engineering and the Diploma of Applied Science, John Alexander Davis; Bachelor of Arts, Miss Isabel Christian White. The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Dr. C. T. C. de Crespigny, presented the candidates for medical degrees; the Dean of the Faculty of Applied Science, Mr. F. W. Reid, presented the candidate for the degree of engineering and the diploma in applied science, and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor J. R. Wilton, presented the candidates for the arts degree. The Chancellor shook hands with and congratulated the successful candidates.

REG 1-7-29

NEW RESEARCH WORK ON PLANT PROBLEMS

Importing Varieties Of Likely Value

NEW study of plant problems will be initiated by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research at an early date, and the services of the necessary investigators can be obtained. An important part of this new work will be connected with the introduction from abroad of new varieties of plants to be of value to Australia. Work along these lines has already been started by one or two State Departments of Agriculture, but the field is vast and the prizes are many. More than 75,000 varieties of plants have been introduced to America in this way already, and a number of these has resulted in the establishment of big industries. The important arrival in Australia of Wimmera rye grass and subterranean clover are two of the more recent cases that might be cited of the value of plant introduction work.

Drought-Resistant Grasses

Australia's present needs are mainly for drought-resistant perennial grasses and fodder plants for the semi-arid areas, suitable grasses and legumes for temporary pasture and rotation purposes in the wheat belt, and improved strains of European herbage plants for south-east grasslands. Two officers will be appointed by the council, and located initially at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute, with which body the council is co-operating very closely. In addition, the council is inviting applications for appointment to the positions of assistant plant pathologist, weeds officer, assistant mycologist, and assistant plant geneticist.

ADV. 2-7-29

UNIVERSITY PUBLIC LECTURE

"PLATO AND SOCRATES"

The third series of public lectures for the year was begun at the University of Adelaide in the Prince of Wales lecture theatre by Professor J. A. Fitzherbert on Tuesday night. The series is entitled "Plato and Socrates." Professor Fitzherbert said the processes of the law were often slow, and legal judgments were upset many years after they had been given, but probably the record was achieved when a barrister in Athens applied to the court to have a judgment set aside that had been passed on an individual 23 centuries previously. The application was refused on the ground that the man, although condemned to death and executed, had since been exonerated by the universal verdict of posterity. The man was Socrates. His qualities were so great, however, that he would in no case have sunk into oblivion. In the early part of his life he followed the trade of his father, a sculptor, and took a keen interest in all the problems of the Athens of the time. The city attracted all the great artists of the time, and men had leisure to think. When a Greek had leisure to think he was apt to do so, having none of the anodynes of modern times. Socrates lived in the height of an intense mental ferment, which was manifest in speculative thinking as well as art, literature, and drama. The Egyptians said the Greek was a child who never grew up, and he certainly had the child's capacity for asking questions; but, unlike the child, he set himself the task of answering them. The lecturer dealt with a number of typical questions which occupied the minds of the ancient Athenians. Socrates studied natural philosophy, but was disappointed at hearing only mechanical explanations of various phenomena, instead of being told that

things were as they were because it was the best and only possible state for them. His chief interest, however, lay in his fellow creatures. He ascribed all wrongdoing to ignorance, and set himself to find out what was right and what was wrong. The statement of the Delphic oracle that there was no one in the world wiser than Socrates he did not accept in its literal sense. He set out to find someone wiser than himself, with the secondary object of extending his own knowledge of the roots of human conduct. His practice was to ask an apparently innocent question, which his interlocutor would answer confidently, and then, by a series of further questions, prove that the answer contained contradictions and was untenable. Plato's "Dialogues" could not be taken as actual shorthand reports of the conversations which took place, but they were fairly typical of the inflections to which the citizens of Athens were subjected. It was Socrates's practice to question anyone of renown on the subject on which he was recognised as an expert, and show his knowledge to be not true knowledge. Socrates was eventually forced to the conclusion that the Delphic oracle was right, in that he knew that he knew nothing, whereas other men did not know even that. He decided that correct belief was as useful as actual knowledge, but this did not absolve the seeker after truth from his search for knowledge. Virtue, which grew from knowledge, was more important than life, and therefore it was essential that it should be placed on the safest possible basis. His search, therefore, was not inspired by mere curiosity, but had a definite object.

Socrates claimed to have a mystic voice, which warned him against a wrong course. This could not be dismissed as merely the voice of conscience, for it was on record that he would stand for hours wrapped in thought. The study of beauty, he held, would lead the soul eventually into contact with the supreme distilled essence of beauty, which was also the source of all virtue. This was the highest ecstasy which could be felt by mortal man. It might be that it was in some such contemplation that he was engaged during his periods of absorption. The skill of Socrates in analysing concepts was sure to upset many long established ideas. He certainly influenced the politics of the day, and not always in the interests of the predominant class. More important still, from the world's point of view, was the group of brilliant and original intellects which attached themselves to him in the search after knowledge. Among them was Plato, Antisthenes, the founder of the cynic school, Xenophon, the brilliant soldier, and the founder of the Cyrenaic school, and a number of the later Pythagorians. The diversity of the views of his followers showed that he taught no set doctrine, yet he taught them to think and ask questions.

It was not, however, always wise to overthrow ideas, and Socrates's habit of asking questions no doubt won him many secret enemies. He was only twice embroiled in politics, on both occasions showing the remarkable courage which he had also shown in warfare. In 399 B.C. he was indicted on the rather complicated charge of atheism, introducing new gods, and corrupting the youth. He adopted an independent attitude throughout the trial, and was condemned to death. It happened that this could not be carried out at once, and Socrates could have escaped had he wished, but he claimed that he had always preached obedience to the laws and refused to make his whole life ridiculous by evading the verdict of the court. His classic reproof to his friends, who proposed this course, was read by the lecturer as an example of his clear-sighted, fearless logic. His noble death had influenced the world far more than had his noble life. He was condemned to death and executed, but exonerated by the universal verdict of posterity.

ADV. 2-7-29

PUBLIC HEALTH

ITS ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION

ADDRESS BY SIR HENRY BAEWELL

The congress of the Royal Institute of Public Health was held this year at Zurich, Switzerland, from May 15 to 20. One of the principal speakers was Sir Henry Barwell, Agent-General for South Australia, who in his capacity as President of the State Medicine and Municipal and Social Hygiene Section, delivered an address on "The Organisation and Administration of Public Health."

Sir Henry said there had, during the past few years, been a marked awakening throughout the world as to the responsibility of the State in the matter of public health, and rapid progress in the realm of State medicine had been the result. The League of Nations, by the establishment of a liaison between

the health services of various countries and by international exchanges of health personnel, had done a great deal to bring about that awakening. The sphere of public health administration should include the effective carrying out and co-ordination of measures conducive to the health of the people, including measures for the prevention, treatment, and cure of sickness and disease; the provision of hospital accommodation; the care and treatment of the blind, deaf and dumb, and mental defectives; some measure of supervision and control in regard to town-planning and housing; the initiation and direction of research; the collection, preparation, and publication of statistics, and the training of persons for health services. State organisation and control should have just as much regard for the prevention of disease as for the care of the sick.

A Central Health Department

To make State control effective it was essential that there should be, in a country of any size, a central health department. It was likewise necessary that there should be a devolution of powers to local authorities, and a third essential was the organised co-operation of the medical profession. The central department should have primary responsibility for the administration of the Health Acts; it should formulate a model scheme or outline of general principles of health administration to which local authorities should be compelled to conform. The department should exercise general control over all local authorities, and should have concurrent jurisdiction with them throughout the State. It should also regulate all voluntary organisations dealing with health matters. It was a matter of importance that there should be close co-operation between the health department and all other Government services in any way connected with health. There was special need for definite co-operation between the State statistician and the health department. It often happened that statistical work with regard to health matters was controlled by the ordinary statistical department, which had no connection whatever with the health department. Every Government statistical department should have a medical officer upon its staff to supervise the collection, tabulation, and analysis of morbidity, mortality, and other vital statistics. If statistics of that kind were to be of effective use in the study of causation they must be taken by a man who really appreciated the value of causative influences.

Essential Legislation

Until recently health legislation dealt very largely—one might say, almost exclusively—with the environments in which people lived and the food which they ate, but recent developments in the science of public health had been directed more and more to a man's individual health, as distinct from environments. It was necessary, therefore, that present-day legislation should provide powers to deal with and control individuals and institutions where necessary in the interests of public health. There should, for instance, be power to prohibit hospitals from discharging a convalescent until he was proved to be non-infective, and power to prevent the convalescent himself from going abroad and mixing with others until he had passed the infective stage. There should generally speaking, be the widest powers possible to investigate and deal with the human sources of infection in all cases of infectious diseases. There was scope for extension and improvement in the important field of maternal welfare. The State should see that it was served by schemes for the supervision and care of mothers before the birth of a child, during childbirth, and thereafter until they were restored to normal activity. There should be adequate provision of properly equipped and efficiently staffed maternity hospitals. The care of the health and the well-being of its children was a national duty of any country. In all health departments, therefore, there should be a division of child welfare for the care of children and for the investigation of the health problems of child life, and the effort of the State to sustain and improve the health of its children should at least continue from the time of birth until the child left school. There should also be provision for following up children who left school in a defective state of health. Although in most countries there were child welfare services, which looked after the infant where necessary during the first month or two of its life, and school medical services which had supervision of the child during its school-going years, there was, as a rule, little or no supervision of children in the intervening period. That surely should be remedied.

Control of Infectious Diseases

Industrial hygiene was an important branch of public health work. Little attention, however, had been devoted to it in the past, particularly as far as industrial and occupational diseases were concerned, and some countries were still without any legislative enactments in regard thereto. The State had a special responsibility in the sphere of infectious diseases. Every department of health should have a division

of epidemiology for the purpose of investigating the problems of infectious diseases and advising generally in all matters of control. An important branch of health administration was that connected with the control of foods and drugs. The administration of such important sources of food supplies as abattoirs and markets should be with the health department. In the field of general sanitation there should at least be supervision by the health department of such matters as the construction of public buildings, the reservation of sites for hospitals, sewage installations, and the purity of water supplies. The importance of and the necessity for the encouragement and development of research work as underlying all advancement in public health could not be too strongly emphasised. In such work the State should take the initiative. It might be carried out in special institutes, or in connection with universities or hospitals, or in all three ways. In any case, the research department and the hospitals should be closely associated.

National Health Insurance

Every State should provide for its people some scheme of national health insurance. The benefits of such scheme should include medical advice and treatment, periodical payments during sickness or disablement, and a cash payment to a mother at childbirth. Provision should also be made for a contributory pension scheme to secure pensions for insured persons and their wives in old age. There should, further, be provision for widows' and orphans' pensions. Publication of information for the purpose of educating persons engaged in health work, and also the public generally in the principles of public health and hygiene, was essential. A division of publicity with bureaus of public health education in connection with the department of health was a necessity. Every effort should be made to interest and instruct the members of the community in the prevention of disease. Above all, they should be taught that disease was an abnormal condition and the preservation of health a duty.