

more appropriate for a general practitioner than that?

The crest is the owl, for wisdom, holding the chairman's gavel which on DR G. I. WATSON's initiative, was presented to the College by the Greek Ambassador at the first Annual General Meeting in November 1953. The motto, "Cum Scientia Caritas" might be translated, "with skill, tender loving care".

These Arms, then, indicate our humble origin and our ancient lineage, stress our close co-operation with nurses and with hospitals, and stimulate us to explore the bright prospect of the future.

REFERENCE

Dickenson, T. Vincent, *Proc. roy. Soc. Med.*, 1930, 23, 11. History of Medicine Section.

AN EXAMINATION IN GENERAL PRACTICE

The College is an academic body. It will be remembered that when at its foundation a sufficient number of keenly interested members were required to launch it the criteria were set wide and easy to apply; thus in the beginning members were recruited from those registered doctors who had been twenty years in general practice, or its equivalent as general medical officers in a school or a factory or a similar institution or in H.M. Forces, and from those who had been in general practice for five years and undertook to accept postgraduate instruction for three days of each year, and from those who with five years experience of general practice also held a higher degree. These recommendations of the Steering Committee set the academic tone of the College.

The annual general meeting in 1954 reduced the length of time in general practice to five years, instituted the system of sponsorship, and made an interview obligatory if required by the censors. All candidates were required to give an undertaking that they would continue approved postgraduate study while they remained in active general practice. These criteria are materially those which appertain today. The annual meeting of 1954 also gave approval to the formation of an *ad hoc* committee "to give full and detailed study to examination as a possible method of entry to membership of the College of General Practitioners and to report to the Council of the College in 1955". The report of this committee contained a complete syllabus and made recommendations on the form which the examination should take. It even went so far as to submit samples of papers which could be set. This report will now be

re-examined in detail by the Council and, indeed, will form the basis of future discussions.

In 1956 the Examination Committee made enquiries of the faculties of the College and reported that most faculties thought that the type of examination suggested was suitable. Opinion amongst members was becoming more sure that the present criteria were inadequate, but a resolution submitted to the Seventh Annual General Meeting in 1959 recommending that the time had now come to institute an examination for admission to membership was lost by a narrow margin, a three-quarter majority of those present and voting being required.

At its annual meeting last November the College decided that an examination should be introduced as one of the criteria for membership for those qualifying after 31 March 1961. It was not envisaged that an examination should be the only or even a necessary criterion for membership of the College; written work such as theses, case reports and work already published will probably also be considered. This is a logical step in the development of the College which is bound by its Articles to study and improve the quality of practice, to provide postgraduate study, and to encourage the teaching of general practice to undergraduates. The mere exercise of defining the scope of the examination will itself give a guide to those whose duty it is to teach undergraduates and organize postgraduate courses; and general practitioners themselves will gain a clearer idea of the range of their work.

The purpose of an examination must be clearly understood. The variety and scope of practice are so great that it would be quite impossible to judge all the capabilities of a candidate however searching the tests may be, and certain attributes of the family doctor cannot be assessed; kindness and sympathy in handling patients and their relatives are qualities an examinee is unlikely to have the opportunity to display before his examiners whatever Mr Punch may suggest. These qualities are necessary in all doctors, nurses and social workers who also, to practice their calling are required to submit to an examination. All that should be expected of an examination is to ensure that a successful candidate is well grounded in the basic principles underlying practice. A glance at the report of the Examination Committee will show just how much ground these principles cover. The syllabus, which must not be allowed to remain static, will define more clearly what is expected of the general practitioner. "He is the flower of his profession" wrote Robert Louis Stevenson long ago. The College intends to see that future generations of family doctors will regain and deserve that title.