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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

COMING OF AGE CELEBRATION.

The Bibliographical Society has just celebrated the close of its twenty-first year of existence, and it was decided unanimously to suspend the rule by which its roll has hitherto been limited to three hundred with a view of enabling those qualified for membership, who wished to join, to aid the Society in carrying on its work. Sir William Osler, the president, was in the chair.

In the annual report, read by the secretary, it was stated that the twelfth volume of the transactions which was to be issued in the course of the year, would include in addition to the work of the last two sessions, some "Notes on Bibliographical Evidence for Literary Students and Editors," by Mr. McKerrow, and a report by Dr. Crous on his bibliographical mission to England; other publications to be issued were Mr. Gordon Duff's "Catalogue of English Incunabula," and if funds permitted "Abstracts of Wills of Cambridge Stationers," by Mr. G. J. Gray and Dr. W. Mortlock Palmer.

EARLY MEDICAL BOOKS.

In his paper on "The Earliest Printed Medical Books" Sir William Osler referred to the interest attaching to individual books, and said that only a few years ago he had seen the copy of a famous book that had just started from its home where it had lain peacefully for nearly 450 years in the very house in which it was printed—the "De Civitate Dei" of St. Augustine, from the press of Sweinheim and Panartz. The leaves of the printed book told man's story as clearly as did the palaeontological record of the earth's strata. He would himself undertake to assign to its decade any leading article that had appeared in the "Lancet" since 1860. Revolutions in the arts occurred far more rapidly than in the mind. Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood was scarcely accepted by his own generation, but in a few years following Jenner's discovery the whole civilised world was vaccinated. By 1480, within twenty-five years of the introduction of printing, the art had spread to 111 places and some 350 printers had been at work. In medicine and in science the fifteenth century was singularly barren. The Arabs completely dominated medical thought. Out of sixty-seven authors represented among the medical printed books before 1480 six were classical, eight Arabic, twenty-three mediæval, and thirty were of the fifteenth century. The first medical printing known was a medical calendar, and, like most of such publications, it laid great stress on the times at which it was favourable for the operation of bleeding to be performed. It was the custom for the monks to be bled five times a year for three days in succession, and the hold of astrology could be gathered from the fact that a thesis on the subject was submitted to the Paris University as late as 1707.