

on the Wright Brothers' scientific research. It was largely due to Mr. Brewer's efforts that Mr. Orville Wright has lent his original aeroplane, on which the first power flights were made at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, to the Science Museum, South Kensington, where it has been for the past twelve years.

Philip Syng Physick (1768-1837)

IN an address recently delivered before the Royal Society of Medicine (*Proc. Roy. Soc. Med.*, 33, 145; 1940) Dr. George Edwards gives an interesting account of Philip Syng Physick, "the father of American surgery". He was born on July 7, 1768, at Philadelphia, where he graduated in the Faculty of Arts at the age of seventeen. In 1788 his father, who was receiver-general of the Colony of Philadelphia, took him to London, where he became a student at St. George's Hospital and served first as a dresser and then as house surgeon to John Hunter. In 1790 he received the diploma of the Royal College of Surgeons. In the following year he went to Edinburgh, where he obtained his doctorate with a thesis on apoplexy, which he dedicated to John Hunter. In 1792 he returned to Philadelphia, and two years later was appointed to the staff of the Pennsylvania Hospital and that of the Philadelphia Dispensary. He rapidly gained an extensive practice owing to his surgical skill, particularly in two operations, namely, enucleation of the lens, and removal of stones from the bladder. He devised several new operative methods and surgical instruments, including improved treatment of chronic ulcers, fractures and dislocations, the invention of a tonsillotome and of a forceps for controlling hæmorrhage, and various modifications of catheters.

In 1800 Physick was appointed professor of surgery at Philadelphia, and held this post until 1819, when he succeeded his nephew, John Syng Dorsey, in the chair of anatomy. He retired in 1831 at the age of sixty-three, and was unanimously elected emeritus professor of surgery and anatomy "as a tribute to his merit in elevating the character of the school and in promoting the advance of medical science". He received many honours at home and abroad. From 1824 until his death thirteen years later he was president of the Philadelphia Medical Society; in 1825 he was the first American to be elected a member of the French Royal Academy of Medicine, and in 1836 he became an honorary fellow of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London, the predecessor of the Royal Society of Medicine. He left no writings of importance, but his methods and teaching are embodied in Dorsey's "Elements of Surgery" (1813), which went through three editions, and Gibson's "Institutes of Surgery" (1824). He died on December 15, 1837.

Hagiological Healing

THE April issue of the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* contains a richly documented article by C. Grant Loomis of Harvard University summarizing some of the aspects of miraculous healing which will be of interest to the anthropologist and folklorist as

well as to the medical historian. While most of the miracles on record appear to have been accomplished solely by prayer and sincere belief in the efficacy and intercession of holy men, additional factors in a number of cases have been superadded to the simple act of faith. In some conditions, for example, such as deafness, paralysis, headache, poisoning, blindness and severed members, the efficacy of saliva has been reported (see *NATURE*, April 13, 1940, p. 585). The external or internal use of water in which the saint has washed himself has been employed for numerous complaints, especially blindness, fever and insanity. Other fluids such as blood from a holy corpse, sacred oil from various sources, milk from the mothers of saints and wine from the chalice or hand of a saint have also been credited with curative properties. In many instances, sacred dust, earth or mud from the houses or burial places of saints have served as the chief element in cures, while grass and flowers from their tombs have sometimes proved beneficial. Relics of all kinds have been used for various ills not only in individuals but also in the control of epidemics. All the major saints and some of the minor ones have been credited with miraculous healing power, but it was exceptional for them to have employed popular remedies.

Jewish-Christian Intermarriages in Budapest

IT has become a commonplace of sociological and economic argument that the rapid increase in facilities of transport and inter-communication between peoples geographically remote from one another has made the world 'a small place'. Evidently it has a profound biological effect upon mankind in the aggregate, diminishing steadily by interbreeding the innate biological differences that formerly existed between races and other differentiated groups of human beings. Prof. Raymond Pearl, when discussing a few years ago the future of war as a phenomenon and a social agent, stressed this tendency to uniformity in human beings as well as its effect in the slow and steady weakening of the religious and social taboos which inhibit mixed marriages. While there is general agreement that interbreeding is taking place at an accelerated pace at the present time, there is very little in the way of precise statistical observation by which this conclusion can be proved and quantified.

Valuable material pertinent to the issue has been drawn by Prof. Pearl from successive volumes of the municipal archives of Budapest, covering the period 1897-1935. From the marriages recorded in this period, of which Prof. Pearl has plotted the figures to show the trend of Christian, Jewish, and mixed marriages (*Bull. Hist. Med.*, 8, 3; 1940), it would appear that the proportion of Jewish and Christian marriages to all marriages of either Christian or Jews increased generally throughout the period and to a marked degree, being 2.6 per cent greater to all Christian marriages in 1935 than in 1897, while it was 3.05 per cent greater to all Jewish marriages in the same year. Since 1925, however, the proportion of mixed Jewish and Christian mar-