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EFFICIENT SURGICAL SERVICE FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY¹

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.

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