

## MISCELLANEOUS MEDICAL NEWS

## DOCTOR JOHNSON AND THE DOCTORS.

"Dr. Johnson," says Boswell, writing under date 1784, the year of Johnson's death, "had in general a peculiar pleasure in the company of physicians," and this was certainly not abated when he took tea at Oxford in the company of Dr. Wall, a "learned, ingenious, and pleasing gentleman." It was on this occasion that the great moralist prophesied, in some sort, the necessity for research into the diseases of the East and of warm climates. He fell foul of the Radcliffe Traveling Fellowship, and averred that the Fellows had done very little good. "I know nothing that has been imported by them; yet many additions to our medical knowledge might be got in foreign countries." And he cited inoculation as having saved more lives than war destroys, and the unnumbered cures performed by Peruvian bark. "I would send the Radcliffe Fellows," he cried, "out of Christendom; I'd send them among barbarous nations." Johnson's kindness to poor old Dr. Robert Levett, his pensioner, is, of course, famous, and equally so are the lines he wrote on the doctor's death at the age of 80 in 1782. Goldsmith, also a physician, was among his intimates, and the chaff bestowed on his new plum-colored coat has become immortal. The coat, terribly worn and threadbare, is now in the London Museum, and suggests the pathetic supposition that the spendthrift poet-physician wore it till it was almost unpresentable. At the time of Goldsmith's death in 1774 Johnson wrote, "Of poor dear Dr. Goldsmith there is little to be told." Goldsmith probably owed £2,000, not less, and this preyed on his mind and heightened a fever, which he further complicated by an excessive use of James' powders. Referring to the debt Johnson humorously asks: "Was ever poet so trusted before?" Later, writing to Bennet Langton, he says, "Let not his frailties be remembered; he was a very great man." If Goldsmith by his over-medication hastened his own death, Johnson by dint of amateur surgery did likewise. Shortly before his death he inflicted such wounds upon himself, in the hope of obtaining relief, as to suggest the idea of suicide. He used a pair of scissors in an endeavor to void the water of dropsy. Johnson's last words were many. To the faithful Langton he said tenderly: "Te teneam moriens deficiente manu." Of his man nurse he said, with a flash of the old humor: "Sir, the fellow's an idiot; he's as awkward as a turnspit when first put into the wheel, and as sleepy as a dormouse." His last recorded words were to a young lady who had asked for his blessing: "God bless you, my dear,"—*Lancet*, December 21, 1912.