

A PANAMA PIONEER.

Science Service reports that the Smithsonian Institution has almost a dozen canes of the sort used by medicine men of a Panama tribe of Indians. Each is carved "with the unmistakable features" of a Dr. William Patterson, who, it is said, was "a leader of a Scottish colony" which went to the coast of Panama in 1698. According to the tradition, he worked such marvelous cures that he came to be looked upon as a god of medicine. His fame and the consequent cult spread to other tribes and his figure in carved wood (showing a man with a long nose, high top hat and a coat of green or black) became an instrument of magic to aid the tribal doctors.

One wonders if this "Dr. William Patterson" is not the WILLIAM PATERSON who, among the founders of the Bank of England, was the organizer of the Darien expedition. He landed in Panama in the same year in which "Dr. William Patterson" is said to have reached that coast. Moreover, WILLIAM PATERSON had earlier in life been a missionary in the West Indies and was accustomed to attend to bodily as well as spiritual healing. But he had larger dreams. He hoped to establish the greatest port in the world on the Isthmus since, he anticipated, the wealth of the Indies, China, Siam and Ceylon would pass that way.

The expedition proved one of terrible suffering and, what with the tropical climate, the pestilences caused by the insects and the hostility of the Spaniards, was finally abandoned. Some American orator said years ago that no one ever eulogized the heroism of these colonists, that no poet embalmed their memory in song, that no novelist had taken their record for a fanciful story (as has since been done). But it is remembered that one of the survivors, a Presbyterian minister, landing at Charleston, became the ancestor of that President of the United States who made PATERSON'S dream come true in building the Panama Canal.

If it should turn out that this founder of the Bank of England and leader of the Scottish Panama Colony was also the "Dr. William Patterson" who landed in Panama in the same year and who as a "medicine man" in the treatment of tropical diseases attained what has been declared to be "a rare brand of immortality," there is further reason for gratitude to this Scottish precursor of ROOSEVELT, GOETHALS and GORGAS.
