

Book Reviews

These interests are not without historical value and are still being indulged today, but with an increasingly old-fashioned air. Attention is turning away from men of genius and their works in virtual isolation to a consideration of their place in contemporary society and of the intellectual forces that influenced them. We are slowly learning that the history of medicine is a part of general history, not a subdivision of clinical or even biological science.

If the purpose and final shape of *Bibliotheca Osleriana* reflect a theory of medical history which is now itself a part of history rather than of its modern practice, so too the contents of some of the main sections are open to criticism. The *bibliotheca prima* (listing what might be called the primary sources) no longer represents the contents of the Osler Library at McGill. Can anyone pretend that some of the other sections, particularly the historical, biographical and bibliographical ones, any longer provide an adequate introduction to the secondary literature of the subject?

One can readily appreciate and sympathize with the sentiments that prompted this reprint. Professor Stevenson provides a delightfully evocative defence of them in his prologue. Where the heart is not engaged, however, use of the head leads one seriously to wonder whether this expensive act of *pietas* was strictly necessary.

E. J. FREEMAN

Johannes Wildberger (1815–1879) ein Schweizer Messerschmied und Wegbereiter der Orthopädie, by G. Grosch (Basler Veröffentlichungen zur Geschichte der Medizin und der Biologie, Fasc. XXVII), Basle and Stuttgart, Schwabe, 1969, pp. 55, illus., S.Fr. 12.

Switzerland has not been outstanding in the history of orthopaedics, even though the world's first orthopaedic institute was established in 1780 at Orbe, by Venel. The light now cast on the hitherto rather shadowy figure of Johannes Wildberger in this new monograph, one of the series issuing from the Institute of Medical History at Basle University under the aegis of Professor Buess, is therefore welcome.

Wildberger was a native of Neunkirchen in Kanton Schaffhausen and was apprenticed as a surgical instrument maker. After a period of travel he settled in Bamberg, in Franconia, where he took an increasing interest in the orthopaedic applications of his craft, fostered by a visit to the first German orthopaedic institute, that of Heine at Würzburg. He devised his own splints for the management of spine and hip diseases, acquired a reputation, and was sent many patients by the local doctors. Because he had to travel widely to see his patients and found their supervision inadequate he set up, in 1849, his own institute for in-patients as an extension of the Bamberg City Hospital, this in the face of opposition based on his lack of professional qualifications.

The institute flourished, though it never held more than thirty patients, some from as far afield as Russia and Sicily. There was the usual pedagogic flavour of the period, with religious and musical instruction; but the essential feature was his insistence on complete rest and rigid, uninterrupted splintage, in which his thought resembles that of Hugh Owen Thomas. Wildberger was very conservative, eschewed manipulation, and approached tenotomy and osteotomy with reluctance. He was one of the earliest therapists to use photographs to document the progress of recovery.

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Wildberger became a renowned local figure and received an honorary medical doctorate from Jena and many foreign honours. In later life he moved his institute to Forchheim, where he had the assistance of his medically-qualified son before the latter emigrated to America. His writings on the proper training of orthopaedic surgeons, with their insistence on early specialist education in methods and appliances based on the orthopaedic institute and clinic, are surprisingly modern.

DAVID LE VAY

Semmelweis: his Life and Work, by G. GORTVAY and I. ZOLTAN (Eng. trans. by Eva Rona and R. Bonnerjea), Budapest, Akadémiai Kaidó, 1968, pp. 288, illus., no price stated.

This book is a translation of the Hungarian edition 'Semmelweis elete es munkassaga' which was originally brought out by the same publishers in 1966.

It is an interesting account of the life of Semmelweis with particular emphasis on the Hungarian aspects of his life story. The discovery of the mode of transmission of puerperal fever is well presented and there is a detailed account of his last illness. Several of the later chapters of the book are devoted to a discussion of the initial resistance to his doctrine and the subsequent dispute over the priority for his discovery. The arguments made in relation to these points are often diffuse and unconvincing but it remains a valuable document for the student of Semmelweis as it is well illustrated and well annotated. A major drawback is the lack of an index and cross reference is therefore a difficult problem.

This volume was presented to foreign delegates attending a Conference in 1968 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Semmelweis. The book is not available outside Hungary, but it can be obtained from the Bookshop for Foreign Trade, Kultura, Budapest I.Fö U.32.

NEIL MCINTYRE

Extinct Medical Schools of Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia, by HAROLD J. ABRAHAMS, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press; London, Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. 580, £4.80.

This is a large, encyclopaedic book which could have been smaller, and better, if it had been arranged on rather different lines. As it is, the narrative flow is disturbed continually by lists of graduates and names of teachers, all of which really ought to be in small type in an appendix. But we must accept the book on its own terms and be grateful for the facts unearthed by Dr. Abrahams.

He tells, in somewhat disjointed prose, of eight short-lived medical schools in Philadelphia between 1840 and 1880. This was competition run riot. In fact it typified some of the most potent forces active in nineteenth-century American society, such as a faith in laissez-faire principles and an urge to innovate, and it thus constitutes a most important area for study as much by historians of human behaviour as by the chronicler of medical events. Eventually, of course, America woke up to the danger and clamped down on these medical degree factories. It is interesting to read of the vital part played by the Press in exposing the greatest scandal of all, i.e. the Eclectic Medical College/American University of Philadelphia, where forgery was practised