

Book Reviews

The Gold-Headed Cane, by WILLIAM MACMICHAEL, facsimile of 1827 ed., with introduction by Thomas Hunt, London, Royal College of Physicians, 1968, pp. 26 + 179, illus., £4.

William Macmichael (1783–1839), M.D. Oxon., F.R.C.P., F.R.S., was educated at Bridgnorth Grammar School and Christ Church, Oxford. After graduating in Arts he studied medicine at Edinburgh and St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, took the M.B. Oxon. and obtained a Radcliffe Travelling Fellowship in 1811. He visited Greece, Bulgaria, Rumania, Russia, Turkey, Sicily and Australia, studied at Stockholm under Berzelius, the famous Swedish chemist, and also researched in mineralogy. In 1816 he came to England, returning to Europe in 1817–18, as described in his first book, *From Moscow to Constantinople* (1819).

Being ruined by the failure of his bankers, he practised in London. From 1824 to 1829 he was Registrar of the College of Physicians, physician to the Middlesex Hospital from 1822 to 1831, Physician Extraordinary to King George IV and Librarian to the king; and later Physician-in-Ordinary to King William IV. He worked hard in College administration, married Mary Jane Freer and had one daughter, afterwards Mrs. John Cheese. In 1836 he became paralysed and aphasic, and died in 1839.

Dr. Thomas Hunt, his great-grandson, possesses Macmichael's annotated, interleaved copy of the first edition of *The Gold-Headed Cane*, here published in facsimile with an introductory memoir by Dr. Hunt, and a coloured reproduction of Macmichael's portrait, painted by William Haynes (1778–1848) and owned by Miss Joan Cheese, also a descendant.

The book is published by the Royal College of Physicians in commemoration of its 450th Anniversary. It recounts the lives of John Radcliffe, Richard Mead, Anthony Askew, William Pitcairn, David Pitcairn and Matthew Baillie, each of whom in turn possessed the cane, supposed to be the narrator. The cane is now in the Royal College of Physicians.

Macmichael's other valued literary work was *Lives of British Physicians* (1830), which he edited and partly wrote.

Sir Max Rosenheim, President of the Royal College of Physicians, has supplied the Preface to Dr. Hunt's Commemoration volume of *The Gold-Headed Cane*. It is a book that all medical historians and scholarly physicians will treasure.

ARTHUR S. MACNALTY

A Continual Remembrance. Letters from Sir William Osler to his Friend Ned Milburn 1865–1919, by HOWARD L. HOLLEY, Springfield, Illinois, C. C. Thomas, 1968, pp. xxiii, 132, illus., \$6.75.

William Osler was born at Bond Head, Ontario, on 12 July 1849 and Edward (Ned) Fairfax Milburn at nearby Oakville on 13 April 1849. They first met in 1864 when they attended Barrie Grammar School and their intimate friendship was maintained by a correspondence which started in 1865 and was to last until Sir William's death in 1919. Osler's letters to Ned Milburn became part of a lifetime's collection of medical historical material by Dr. Lawrence Reynolds of Ozark, Alabama, who bequeathed it to the University of Alabama. The reviewer has fond memories of a visit

Book Reviews

to the splendid Lawrence Reynolds Historical Library in the Birmingham Medical Centre and the cordiality of its custodian, Mrs. Martha Lou Thomas.

This volume traces the life of Osler through this refreshing and friendly correspondence. The first letter, when Osler was fifteen years of age, is dated 10 January 1865. It was written from Dundas to Milburn at Oakville because the Christmas vacation had separated them. The last, written from 13 Norham Gardens on 25 November 1919, also carried Christmas greetings. It reached Ned Milburn together with a cheque two or three days before Christmas—a fateful Christmas since Osler died on the afternoon of 29 December 1919.

This lifetime span enables us to retread Osler's triumphant progress from Barrie Grammar School to Trinity College Grammar School, Weston, where he became head prefect and excelled in the school sports; to a Dickson Scholarship at Trinity College, Toronto in 1867; and thereafter to the Toronto Medical School for a short spell. He entered McGill in 1870, graduated in 1872, and joined the medical faculty in 1874, first as a lecturer and soon as professor. Then came letters in turn from 131 South 15th Street, Philadelphia, 1 West Franklin Street, Baltimore, and finally Norham Gardens, Oxford. The earliest Oxford letters came from 7 Norham Gardens, a temporary abode until the Oslers moved into No. 13, which became known as 'The Open Arms'. Along the road, there are holiday letters from Llandulas, North Wales, and picture postcards from Cairo, the Upper Nile and Sorrento.

This is a treasure-house of Osleriana—his letters, examples of his handwriting and photographs of him—so there is something for everyone, whether he loves the aura or detests the myth surrounding this great personality.

D. GERAINT JAMES

Milestones in Midwifery, by WALTER RADCLIFFE, Bristol, John Wright, 1967, pp. x, 110, illus., 25s. 0d.

Milestones in Midwifery is a history of obstetrics from the earliest times up to the nineteenth century. It is full of accurate details, but not so full that the absorbing narrative is lost. It will help most people who have a smattering of knowledge of the subject to piece their mental pictures together and correct their chronology.

After summarizing the history of midwifery before the first printed textbook on the subject appeared in 1513, the author takes us through the succeeding centuries and traces progress by reference to the printed books as they appeared, and to teachers who were outstanding. The descriptions are of people, and what they did and wrote, and the whole makes up a fascinating story.

Here and there the author compares or contrasts the methods described with those accepted at the present time, and it is evident that he is an experienced obstetrician, a fact which adds to the value of the book and puts him in sympathy with the modern reader.

I have only found two historical errors; James Young Simpson's other assistant when he tried chloroform with Matthews Duncan was George Skene Keith, not his younger brother Thomas, as stated on page 81; and of course in the British Isles the first maternity hospitals were the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin and the British Lying-in Hospital in Brownlow Street, London.