

Book Reviews

succeeds in conveying to the reader his own warm interest in the sturdy individualists who were fighting psychiatric battles a hundred and fifty years ago. The first third of his book deals with the physicians of the late eighteenth century; the rest with three men of considerable stature—John Haslam, James Cowles Pritchard, and John Conolly.

AUBREY LEWIS

Arzt der Tyrannen, by ARTUR SWERR, München, Süddeutscher Verlag, 1961, 420 pp., DM19.80.

There are two main methods of biography—one factual, the other fanciful. The latter consists of choosing a personage, preferably famous, or even more preferably, pre-Christian or early Christian, and weaving a romantic story around him, or, less likely, her. Nowadays, a sexually attractive or lurid cover on a paperback is an essential if the less discriminating reading public is to be tempted into buying or even sometimes reading it! As recent examples, *Spartacus* and *Ben-Hur* come immediately to mind. The Americans can be regarded as the major exponents of this ever-increasing trend in their efforts (however well intentioned) to spread 'literacy' throughout the world.

This book is a good example of the German contribution. As the blurb inside the cover says—'... it is a colourful and serious novel of ancient times, filled with adventure, history and a yearning for the purity of the soul!'

It concerns Democedes of Croton (550–460 B.C.), who practised as 'Stadtarzt' in Aegina, where he successfully dealt with an epidemic of Plague, acted as personal doctor to the tyrants—Peisistratos of Athens, Polycrates of Samos, and the Persian King Darius—the mightiest man of his time; how he married the daughter of the famous athlete Milo, how he lost her and his children and fled to Platea near Athens ... and so on'. It is 420 pages long, and is pretentiously divided into five papyri instead of chapters.

Peter Ustinov has written that nobody can fully guess at the comportment or mentality of, for example, the average Roman. Once he is given small talk he sounds modern, since it is impossible to conceive of ephemeral banter in any but our own idiom. This is very true of books such as this and is their greatest weakness.

The Torch is a similar novel by Wilder Penfield. It is based on the life of Hippocrates. In his introduction Penfield, in a spirit of self-abnegation, says '... it is reassuring for a surgeon to know that although failure in the literary field may cause indigestion or even loss of sleep, it is not apt to be followed by a funeral!' Maybe this is just as well for the author of this book.

I. M. LIBRACH

Great Ideas in the History of Surgery, by LEO ZIMMERMAN, M.D. and ILZA VEITH, Ph.D., London, Baillière, Tindall, and Cox, 587 pp., 115 illus., £6.

It was a good if not a great idea which originated in the minds of the authors when they decided to compose this book, which is put together in a novel way. The whole field of surgical history is surveyed and is grouped into nine parts or sections, each of which comprises accounts of a group of men representative of the surgery of that particular period. Extracts are also given from the works of the most notable of them so that the reader obtains first-hand information as to certain important elements in their teaching and practice.

The first section, called 'The Beginnings', includes a brief account of surgery in