

Book Reviews

Essays in Eponymy: Obstetric and Gynecologic Milestones. HAROLD SPEERT, M.D.
New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958; pp. ix, 700. Illustrated. \$15.

To read this book is to realize quickly that it is one which we have been waiting for, and one which we might have liked to write ourselves. Few would have done as well as Dr. Speert. Only a gynaecologist could have made the book so instructive, and only a medical historian with a literary gift could have combined an enjoyable narrative with a reliable work of reference. The author has taken 101 gynaecologists who have given their names to some technique or aspect of gynaecology; most of these are familiar names, a few are perhaps not very well known outside their own country. Each name prompts an essay giving the historical and clinical background to the man's work with extensive quotations from his original description (translated into English where necessary) and a concise biography of the man himself.

The book is composed of seventy-nine independent chapters (some tell of more than one eponym); these are grouped in twelve parts each dealing with a different aspect of gynaecology—instruments, positions, operations and so on. It is very well illustrated. Library researchers will congratulate Dr. Speert on his success in finding ninety-four portraits, so that only seven are missing. Some of these may still come to light. Several of the seven are relatively less famous, and all were probably more modest than the other ninety-four. It is surprising if Champetier de Ribes (1848–1935) has not left a photograph behind; and Dr. Emma Louise Call (1847–1937), the only woman to be included and the joint discoverer of the Call-Exner bodies among ovarian granulosa cells, obviously belonged to the photographic age. Little is known of Martin Naboth of Leipzig (1675–1721) and his portrait has not been found. The only other unportrayed German is H. L. F. Robert (1814–78) who described the very rare double Naegele pelvis. Neither of the eponymous Douglasses left behind a picture that could be copied. James Douglas (1675–1742) was 'Queen Charlotte's personal physician' who gave his name to the cul-de-sac of the pelvic peritoneum, while John C. Douglas (1775–1850) of Dublin described spontaneous evolution of the foetus to correct shoulder presentation. Hermann T. Gärtner of Copenhagen (1785–1827) who recognized and described the primitive urogenital duct previously noted by Malpighi, has also no portrait.

Readers in various parts of the world may regret the absence of some of their national names. Fergusson's speculum, Wrigley's forceps, the Coombs' anti-globulin test, Auvard's speculum and Aveling's repositor perhaps deserved inclusion; but for all that, the book is a valuable one for quick reference for both medical historians and gynaecologists, and a most readable companion for an odd hour by the fireside.

ALISTAIR GUNN

John Wesley among the Physicians: A Study of Eighteenth-century Medicine. A. WESLEY HILL.
London: Epworth Press, 1958; pp. 135. 10s. 6d. net.

John Wesley was one of the greatest, and certainly one of the most discussed, figures of the eighteenth century. Everyone knows of his enormously successful and long-continued campaign as an evangelist, and many appreciate the hardship under which he worked in his daily progress from one town to another. But it is less well known that Wesley, although he had no medical training, wrote a book which had a great influence on the health of the people.

In 1747 Wesley published a little book called *Primitive Physick*. It went through twenty-three editions in his lifetime, and nine further editions after his death. It was

Book Reviews

so popular that Wesley could afford to stand above criticism. When a critic castigated it, Wesley wrote him a polite note to tell him that since the review appeared more copies had been sold than ever, and to invite him to write something further in the same vein. It would of course be foolish to read Wesley's prescriptions apart from the medical background of his time, and when we do so we find that many are not so ridiculous as they might appear at first sight. His book starts with a series of six rules for the preservation of health, and it can hardly be doubted that these had a considerable effect on the personal hygiene of the people. The ailments for which Wesley gave prescriptions were mainly of nervous type.

Wesley was one of the first to use electricity for the treatment of disease. In 1756 he procured an electrical apparatus and started to treat patients. Within three years patients were so numerous that he had to divide them into four groups, treated in different parts of London. He also wrote a book—*The Desideratum*—on this subject. Published in 1760, it presents many points of great interest.

Dr. Wesley Hill has written an interesting and accurate description of these two works, and has discussed sympathetically the medical background from which they rose. He is to be commended on a very interesting little book.

E. ASHWORTH UNDERWOOD

Chronik der Kinderheilkunde. ALBRECHT PEIPER. Leipzig: Georg Thieme, 1958; pp. 527. Illustrated. D.M. 51.20.

This is the third edition of a well-known history of paediatrics. It is beautifully produced with good illustrations, several of which are in colour. The first sections of the book are concerned with child care in the ancient world, next comes a discussion in such subjects as the physiology of children, vitamin deficiencies, feeding, and children's hospitals. Lastly there are short histories of various diseases; the subsection on erythema nodosum, for instance, occupies one and a half pages and is followed by eight references, the most recent being dated 1939. At the end of the book there is a bibliography of paediatric histories and a list of all the authors quoted, in number about 1,300.

The book is written in German, and obviously the writer's sources of reference have been mainly German. For this reason it contains the same sort of errors as would an English history of German medicine. For instance, the author says that the first writers to condemn swaddling were Rosen (1764), Frank (1780), and Rousseau (1762). He fails to mention, however, that Rousseau remarked that 'in England, senseless and barbarous swaddling clothes have become almost obsolete'. This reform was mainly due to William Cadogan, who is referred to in another context elsewhere in the book. (The date given for the first edition of Cadogan's book is wrong.) The other great English advocate for the cessation of swaddling was William Buchan whose important works *Domestic Medicine* (1769) and *Advice to Mothers* (1803) are nowhere mentioned. There are other surprising omissions such as Hurlock's book (1742), *A Practical Treatise on Dentition*, and Cheadle's paper on 'Three cases of scurvy supervening on rickets in young children', which appeared five years before Barlow's classic on scurvy.

It is, of course, impossible for a work of this size to cover such a vast subject adequately. If perhaps the book is a little disappointing when viewed through English eyes, it has at least been produced in 1958, whereas the only book on the same subject from this country was published in 1931 and has long been out of print.

JOHN RENDLE-SHORT; JOHN LORBER