

Book Reviews

CHRISTOPHER C. BOOTH, *Doctors in science and society: essays of a clinical scientist*, London, The Memoir Club (*British Medical Journal*), 1987, 8vo, pp. xv, 318, illus., £14.95.

Christopher Booth has had an extremely distinguished medical career, at various times being professor of medicine at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, president of the British Medical Association and director of the Clinical Research Centre at Northwick Park Hospital. Throughout his life, he has belied the jibe that doctors only take up history as a hobby in their retirement by producing a steady stream of scholarly historical papers. This volume is a collection of them, reprinted from various sources.

The first half of the book consists of eight papers about some remarkable people of the mid-eighteenth century, who shared the interconnected themes of Quakerism, the American Revolution, and the lovely dales of North Yorkshire whence they came. The first essay shows how the Age of Reason, rather than being merely the age of vigorous purging, cupping, and quackery as popularly portrayed, saw the work of Hunter, Lind, Jenner, and Withering pointing to the future. Samuel Garth's contribution to fashionable London as physician, poet, and politician is followed by a paper on the lesser-known William Hillary, who spent much of his life in Barbados and wrote one of the first books on tropical diseases. John Fothergill and his caring sister, who was his housekeeper, are discussed not only regarding the study of angina pectoris, but also their friendships with Rush and Franklin and vigorous political attempts to avert war in America. Robert Willan, the dermatologist, was another in this group. He was taught mathematics in Yorkshire by John Dawson, a local doctor who had twelve senior wranglers among his pupils, as well as John Haygarth and Adam Sedgwick. Essays on such little-known men as Dawson and Hillary are worthy of a wide distribution.

Joining the two parts of the book are essays on the eradication of smallpox, which is a model of the kind of lecture that should be given regularly to all medical students, and a study of the growth of medical journals in Britain. Modern history, the second section, is served with reviews of the role of technology, the rise of clinical research, and the development of the Hammersmith Hospital, much of which is written from personal experience. We are sadly warned of worse medical care if money, and therefore time, are not made available for research.

This volume is the first in a series published by the *British Medical Journal*, the Memoir Club, which should bring back into fashion books of essays such as this. It should also foster the recording of contemporary history. The book is well produced, easy to read, and published at a price that can give it the very wide readership that it deserves among those who enjoy good writing, scholarship, and thoughtful reminiscence.

John M. T. Ford
Tonbridge

GUNTER MANN and FRANZ DUMONT (editors), *Samuel Thomas Soemmerring und die Gelehrten der Goethezeit. Beiträge eines Symposions in Mainz vom 19. bis 21. Mai 1983* (with a Soemmerring bibliography by Gabriele Wenzel-Nass), Stuttgart and New York, Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1985, 8vo, pp. 437, DM 98.00.

RUDOLPH WAGNER, *Samuel Thomas von Soemmerrings Leben und Verkehr mit seinen Zeitgenossen* (reprinted from the 1844 edition, with an introduction by Franz Dumont), Stuttgart and New York, Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1986, 4to, pp. 731, DM 118.00.

Samuel Thomas Soemmerring (1755-1830) was probably the most highly regarded German anatomist of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. His particular interests were neuroanatomy and the anatomy of the sense organs. Although he contributed to comparative anatomy and vertebrate palaeontology, much of his research was restricted to the human body, and one of his best-known books was *Vom Baue des menschlichen Körpers* (1791-6).