

Book Reviews

Sir Walter Scott: the Wounded Falcon, by SIR ARTHUR S. MACNALT, London, Johnson, 1969, pp. 189, illus., 35s.

So much has been written about the Great Unknown, so many people have visited Abbotsford, so many have, in the past, read the Waverley Novels, that one wonders that anyone could find it worth while to pen yet another account of the life of that painful genius, Sir Walter Scott, and it was with some trepidation that your reviewer opened this book, certain that so small a volume would be trite, otiose and distorted. He was wrong.

Distortion there is: Sir Arthur's obvious admiration and love for his subject shine through every sentence, almost every word. No condemnation is to be found here for Sir Walter Scott's financial irresponsibility; nothing but condonation for even the worst of his works; no realization that his books have almost ceased to be read, that few are to be found who can quote even a few lines of *Marmion*; that the days of the great romantic have passed, probably for ever.

However, as one reads this book, one is borne on the tide of Sir Arthur's enthusiasm. Sir Walter Scott *was* a genius; the world *was* a better place because he lived; and Scotland was fortunate in her chronicler, whose writings were often worthy of the admiration of those with the old-fashioned qualities of patriotism and honesty. Sir Walter may have been a snob, but he was worthy of a better fate than was his; he inspired people in all walks of life with love and respect, and his endeavours to free himself from debt when physical breakdown and death stared him in the face, remind one of Marvell's lines, 'He nothing common did or mean, Upon that memorable scene.'

The chapter on the medical aspects of Sir Walter's life may be thought the weakest part of the book. One had hoped for some explanation in his medical history for Sir Walter's extraordinary drive, perhaps from the psychological effects of infantile paralysis, but the enquirer will find nothing but a few bare facts, too short and too commonplace to stimulate the imagination.

Old men often lapse into stupidities in their anecdotal. There is no trace of old age in this last memorial to its author. This little book sparkles with bubbles from the Pierian spring, and all those who remember Sir Arthur with respect or, as many do, with a more emotional feeling, will be glad that it is a work so well done and, by its style and form, so suitable for a public who no longer have first-hand acquaintance with the works of Sir Walter Scott. In spite of careless proof-reading, we have here an excellent short biography of one of the world's giants, and a book which will serve well as a monument to its author and to its subject alike.

M. H. ARMSTRONG DAVISON

L'Enseignement de la Médecine en France des Origines à nos Jours, by CHARLES COURY (Collection 'Monographies de la Chaire d'Histoire de la Médecine'), Paris, L'Expansion scientifique française, 1968, pp. 200, no price stated.

Professor Charles Coury, who is one of the leading physicians at the Hôtel Dieu in Paris, is also the present occupant of the university chair in the history of medicine. Many of his predecessors in the chair have been content to give occasional lectures, but Professor Coury has been active in obtaining support to give his department a

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physical as well as a nominal existence, and the well-equipped library in the rooms given over to his department in the old Faculty building offer to undergraduates and postgraduate students the opportunity of browsing, or of undertaking serious research in the history of medicine.

Professor Coury has also given much thought to the problems of medical education and the present monograph brings together two of his chief interests. At a time when the methodology and content of the medical curriculum is under critical review in many countries, this brief history of medical teaching in France acquires more than usual significance. Beginning in Carolingian times—for there was medical teaching in the cathedral schools before the rise of the universities—this informative account emphasizes the increasing aridity and formalism of medical teaching in the pre-revolutionary period. As with so many other departments of life in France, the French Revolution of 1789 was the watershed, and after a few years of chaos, a new approach to clinical medicine and its teaching arose in the hospitals. As in Britain, these, and not the university lecture rooms, became the real centres of medical education, and in them was forged that hierarchical chain of continuity (again, to be matched in Britain) between master and pupil and surviving until the master was retired and the former pupil in his chair. The history also gives us much information about the role of the medical corporations, extra-mural courses, and private teaching in the development of the present system in France, as well as on the important professional and scientific societies and their publications. It should be of interest not only to medical historians but to all medical teachers.

F. N. L. POYNTER

CONTRIBUTORS

- ADAMSON, P. B., M.D., Beckwith House, Beckwithshaw, Harrogate, Yorkshire.
ALLDERIDGE, PATRICIA B., M.A., Archivist, Bethlem Royal Hospital, Monks Orchard, Eden Park, Beckenham, Kent.
BATTY SHAW, A., M.A., D.M., F.R.C.P., Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, Norwich.
BLANCO, RICHARD L., B.S., M.A., Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of History, State University College at Brockport, Brockport, New York 14420, U.S.A.
COPE, SIR ZACHARY, M.D., M.S., F.R.C.S., 170 Chiltern Court, Baker Street, London, N.W.1.
DAVISON, M.H. ARMSTRONG, M.B.E., T.D., M.D., F.F.A.R.C.S., The Department of Anaesthesia, The Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
GASKELL, E. B.A., A.L.A., The Librarian, Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London, N.W.1.
GUERRA, FRANCISCO, M.D., Ph.D., D.Sc., c/o Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London, N.W.1.
HABERMAN, H. F., M.D., F.R.C.P.(C.), Room 7318, Medical Sciences Building, University of Toronto, Toronto 181, Ontario, Canada.
HUNTER, RICHARD, M.D., The National Hospital, Queen Square, London, W.C.1.
ISKANDAR, A. Z., D.Phil.(Oxon), Department of History of the Health Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, California 90024, U.S.A.
KEELE, KENNETH D., M.D., F.R.C.P., Leacroft House, Leacroft, Staines, Middlesex.
KEMP, MARTIN, M.A., Department of Fine Art, The University of Glasgow, Glasgow, W.2.
MENON, I. A., Ph.D., Room 7318, Medical Sciences Building, University of Toronto, Toronto 181, Ontario, Canada.
SCHMITT, CHARLES B., B.Ch.E., Ph.D., Department of Philosophy, University of Leeds, Leeds.