

Book Reviews

scholastic medicine became antiquated and its remains lived on among the people as superstitions and under such guises as dream books and astrological calendars. How the frontiers between these two branches of knowledge changed, were blurred and redefined is shown in Paul Diepgen's contribution *Die Volksmedizin und wissenschaftliche Heilkunde* of 1936.

The main theme running through this imposing collection of articles by specialists, published previously in less accessible form, is the attempt to determine how much of folk medicine is and has been valid or at least helpful. The term 'folk medicine' is here extended from the use for European rural communities to those overseas and of the past. Several articles stress the modern discovery of biochemical action confirmed in herbs recognized by ancient and 'savage' healers. Other authors attempt a demarcation of the part played by suggestion, faith and social organization in the cures effected by shamanism and exorcisms. One of the most arresting articles is that by Herbert Fischer on *Heilgebärden* 'healing gestures'. With the aid of works of art, in small but good reproductions, in different cultures during different periods, and of field work, the healing symbolism of various attitudes of fingers and hands is shown. To the student of Eastern religion and Chinese, Tibetan and Indian theories of physiology, this is the tip of a vast iceberg not touched upon by Fischer but awaiting exploration. This example shows how the book under review is of interest to many besides the medical historian, e.g. the art historian, the legal historian, the ethnologist, anthropologist, and the student of psychology and comparative religion.

There are three indices: of persons, places and subjects; but the Hindu, Greek and other gods often mentioned in the text cannot be found in either index. But this is small criticism of a veritable treasure trove.

MARIANNE WINDER

Prelude to Fame: Crawford Long's Discovery of Anaesthesia, by RUBY L. RADFORD, Los Altos, California, Geron-X Inc., 1969, pp. 175, illus., \$4.95.

The story of the introduction of surgical anaesthesia into medical practice is a sad one due largely to the bickering which took place over the honour for the discovery. There is little doubt that the major stimulus to its widespread use was Bigelow's report in 1846 of Morton's use of ether at the Massachusetts General Hospital on 16 October of that year.

Several years earlier, Crawford Long, a general practitioner of Jefferson, Georgia, had used ether for a minor surgical procedure and continued to use it occasionally. However, he failed to communicate his results to the profession at large and so forfeited what would otherwise have been a unique place in medical history.

This book describes the life of Long. It is written primarily for young people and, as such, it is of little value to the medical historian or the serious reader. Miss Radford is a native of Georgia and her Southern loyalty is evident not only in her views of Long's place in the history of anaesthesia, but also when discussing the civil war and the abolition of slavery.

Prelude to Fame is pleasantly written, but it is unlikely to have much appeal for readers of this journal.

NEIL MCINTYRE