

his enthusiasm for the technical wizardry of his subject. Shepherd makes a strong and competent case from within surgery for Tait's importance as having introduced major innovations into surgical practice. The most significant of these were principles rather than techniques. Tait, for instance, was one of the first surgeons to advocate laparotomy as a diagnostic procedure and insist that once a surgical condition of the abdomen was diagnosed, that operation should follow immediately.

These, and other, canons of operative behaviour were slowly developed throughout his life by a man whose forthrightness, truculence, and enthusiasm brought upon himself numberless petty quarrels, major legal actions, scandals, and intrigues. His birth was typical of the years to follow. Was he or was he not James Young Simpson's bastard son? Shepherd does not think so, but he has not come up with any more evidence than that originally presented by Tait's first biographer W. S. McKay. Following his student days in Edinburgh, Tait, after a brief period in Wakefield, finally descended on Birmingham, where his relative stature soon allowed him to establish himself in the gynaecological, social, and political life of the city. Tait's surgical career was characterized by his attempt to turn his hand to, and innovate in, most operations; then to publish a series of cases showing success well above average. He had a very confident sense of the value of his own discipline and waged continuous war against competitors in the gynaecological field, such as electrotherapists. Tait helped gynaecology *mean* surgery. Professionally, his career was marked by his battles with the London élite, his controversies with Spencer Wells, his opposition to Lister, and his support for the antivivisectionists. Tait, however, was no provincial conservative. He was a bold and enthusiastic early propagandist for Darwinian evolution and engaged in correspondence with Darwin on various natural historical matters. Nonetheless, Tait's observations in this area were, as Shepherd indicates, "rather amateurish" (p. 118), a judgment that begs an elucidation that this biography never quite gets round to making. The relationships between Tait's antivivisectionism, his evolutionary standpoint, and antagonism to antiseptics are never explored. One key might lie in the provincial metropolitan dichotomy and Tait's capacity to dominate in Birmingham what was possibly a mediocre scientific circle. How, if at all, are provincial medicine and anti-Listerism related? Tait's antivivisectionist pronouncements earned him scorn from London, but what response did they receive locally? Shepherd, in other words, has only opened up potential areas of investigation and not closed them. This is an excellent, down to earth, technical biography of Tait, but not, it must be hoped, the last word.

Christopher Lawrence  
Wellcome Museum at the Science Museum

DORA B. WEINER (editor), *Philippe Pinel. The clinical training of doctors. An essay of 1793*, Baltimore, Md., and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. x, 102, illus., £4.50 (paperback).

Philippe Pinel submitted this essay in 1793 as an entry to a competition sponsored by the Society of Medicine. The manuscript remained undiscovered in the archives of the National Academy of Medicine in Paris until 1935. Only in 1971 was the complete French text first published. In 1793 Pinel was on the edge of his years of medical fame. The Society of Medicine in that year invited essays which would "Determine the best method to teach practical medicine in a hospital". The memoir therefore is a particularly interesting document since it discusses, analyses, and prescribes for European and especially French medical education at a time of intellectual turbulence.

Pinel first establishes that medicine must be taught in hospitals, and then describes in outline the internal and external topography of the ideal hospital. Following this, he surveys the teaching of medicine in the various centres in Europe. Finally, he describes exactly how medicine should be taught. There can be few finer, short, lucid texts in the history of medicine that could serve as a better introduction to the main themes in late eighteenth-century medical thought. Environmentalism, hygiene, neo-Hippocratism, nosology, and nosography take on simple, flesh and blood meanings. What is surprising perhaps is the absence of any reference to surgery and surgical patients as a means of teaching pathology. This text seems tailor-made as a

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starting-point for teaching the history of medicine today. The translator is to be thanked for having made available such a precise and excellent rendering.

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DAVID HAMILTON, *The healers. A history of medicine in Scotland*, Edinburgh, Canongate, 1981, 8vo, pp. xiii, 318, £12.95.

Most historians of medicine are aware of the contribution made by Scotland to medical progress from the rise of the Edinburgh medical school in the early eighteenth century to the present day, but fewer know of the process by which a small, poor, and relatively backward country by late seventeenth-century European standards could come from the rear of the pack and take over the lead in medicine for almost a century. The situation raises certain important questions for medical historians. Was this, for example, the result of a slow gestation over several centuries or a response to a set of circumstances unique to the early eighteenth century? A broad-based medical curriculum having been established, in which clinical teaching and instruction in anatomy played an important part, what effect did this have on the medical profession in Scotland's larger and more politically powerful partner, England? Conversely, what effect did Westminster-based politics have in shaping medical developments in Scotland? Given the importance of Scotland in medical history, it is surprising that until the publication of David Hamilton's book *The healers*, no short account of Scottish medicine from the early Middle Ages to the present day had been written. The present book goes a long way towards filling this gap in Scottish medical historiography. Of course Comrie's great two-volume *History of Scottish medicine* remains an invaluable reference guide, but Hamilton's book complements Comrie, being designed to fill a different niche and to give a concise, generalized view unobscured by too much detail, providing answers to the type of questions posed above.

Attractively presented, the book aims at being sufficiently readable to catch the interest of the non-specialist, while remaining a serious and scholarly account of the subject, a difficult task which for the most part the author manages to achieve very well. More than this, he makes a real attempt at relating developments in medicine to other social, economic, and even political events in Scotland at each period examined, never losing sight of the society which gave rise to the various medical factors he discusses. After a brief glance at pre-Christian Scotland, the book covers the period from the Dark Ages to the reorganization of the National Health Service in the mid-1970s, a time-span of around 1,500 years. To cope with this time-span and with the complexities of the topic, certain recurrent themes are used to hold the text together, for example, studies in each period of the main infectious diseases afflicting the population – leprosy, plague, cholera, and others – and the methods used to control them; the standard of medical service provided to pauper and to well-to-do; and the work performed by the different categories of medical practitioner. The author's interpretation of who could be regarded as a "healer" is unusual and includes not only the more orthodox men of medicine – physician, surgeon, and apothecary – but many who today would not be regarded as such, including local landowners, ministers of religion, quacks, and in the nineteenth century purveyors of patent medicines. This is an important reminder that for most of the period covered, the majority of Scotland's population obtained medical aid from a variety of sources including folk cures, healing wells, and magic. These early chapters give a very thorough account of Scottish medicine to the dawn of the Scottish Enlightenment, although the author's knowledge of medieval history sometimes appears shaky and he is too ready to fall back on famine and warfare as an explanation of the spread of epidemic disease, failing to face up to the fact that visitations of pestilence came and went in European societies often with little reference to prevailing conditions. The greater part of the book is devoted to the period from the rise of the Edinburgh medical school in the early eighteenth century to the present day. His account here is masterful and unusual in concentrating on more general aspects of medical history rather than on the peaks of achievement or on personalities. There is a useful analysis of the origins of Scotland's sudden rise to medical eminence, the impact this was to have on the English medical scene, the subsequent battle between the Scottish and English medical