

Book Notices

MARTIN KAUFMAN, STUART GALISHOFF, TODD L. SAVITT (editors), *Dictionary of American medical biography*, 2 vols., Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 1984, 8vo., pp. xvi, 1,027, £85.50 from Eurospan, 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8LU, UK.

It has been more than half a century since H. A. Kelly and W. L. Burrage published their *Dictionary of American medical biographies*, so the present work needs no excuse. For both the range of its coverage and its reflection of contemporary scholarship, the work of Kaufman and his colleagues will immediately establish itself as a standard reference. The guiding editorial principles are sensible, even if they do not encourage elegant writing. Individual entries are kept to roughly 400 words, in which basic biographical information and brief details of education, career and contributions are summarized. Thus, Harvey Cushing gets no more space than the patent medicine entrepreneur J. C. Ayer. An attempt has been made to provide representative geographical (none of the physicians practising in Alaska was exactly a world figure), sexual (almost 100 women are included), and racial (Black physicians get good coverage) balance. Nurses, medical philanthropists, medical social workers, prominent educators, and hospital administrators are also represented. The result is an unusual, and unusually good, reference work, made even more useful by the full index and extensive series of appendices listing individuals by date and place of birth, occupation or speciality, and place of medical or graduate education. The contributors have maintained a high level of accuracy, although the compressed format sometimes leads to ambiguities, as in the entry on William Baynham, who could be interpreted as having taken twenty-nine years to perform the first successful operation for extrauterine pregnancy.

JÖRN HENNING WOLF (editor), *Aussatz, Lepra, Hansen-Krankheit, Ein Menschheitsproblem im Wandel, Teil II: Aufsätze*, Würzburg, Deutsches Aussätzigen-Hilfswerk, 1986, 8vo, pp. xi, 470, illus. DM 69.00, (paperback).

In 1982 the Deutsches Museum in Munich, in conjunction with the German Leprosy Relief Association, hosted a magnificent exhibition on the history of leprosy. Its catalogue, Part I of this composite work, attracted deserved praise, and it is no disgrace to declare that it has been surpassed by this companion volume of essays, in German (25), English (4) and French (1). A quarter of the book explains modern discoveries, of both cause and treatment, in layman's language, while the rest covers the history and distribution of the disease world-wide from Egyptian antiquity to the present. Scarcely a contribution is without interest; and while some of the themes are common enough, others are rarely touched on. The specialist on pre-Columbian America may know something of medieval European pathology, but he is unlikely to have read of leprosy in ancient China. The book's greatest strength is in its coverage of the European Middle Ages (less is said of the period from 1550 to the present), when leprosy was one of the most common diseases. Its history is here studied from a variety of standpoints, medical, architectural, theological, literary, nutritional and social, and there is an awareness of the significance of modern medical research in throwing light on some of the medieval evidence. But there is no search for anachronistic explanations, and the many illustrations help to focus attention on how medieval contemporaries saw the disease. The sophistication of many essayists, as well as the sound and extensive factual knowledge revealed in all the historical contributions, contrast sadly with the recent discussions of leprosy as a historical phenomenon in certain British medical publications. This volume of essays shows what can be done when historians and epidemiologists collaborate in the proper exploitation of their scholarship.

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KLAUSH. HUEBNER, *Long walk through war: A combat doctor's diary*. Military History Series 4. College Station, Texas A & M University Press, 1987, 8vo, pp. xv, 207, illus., [no price stated].

The American Army's 88th Infantry Division landed in Naples 12 February 1944; several hundred miles and just under fifteen months later Dr Huebner was told that the war was over. By then this twenty-nine year old Battalion Surgeon had inspected many latrines, packed a variety of wounds as best he could, and consumed an astounding amount of liquor. His medicine could not be sophisticated; and like GI Joe he spent a lot of time bored, wet and scared. His preferences for the historical present and a clipped style can occasionally irritate, but these are faithful to the book's beginnings in the coded notes he scribbled on the line. Dr Huebner's family emigrated from Bavaria to the United States in 1926, when he was ten years old. In 1942, before he received his commission, his fraternity brothers at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School twice reported him to the FBI as a Nazi sympathizer. Dime-store philosophy is not, however, his style; Dr Huebner also leaves it up to the reader to draw broader conclusions from his acute comments about the symbolic and psychological functions of medical personnel in the fields of war.

CARL J. PFEIFFER, *The art and practice of western medicine in the early nineteenth century*, Jefferson NC, McFarland & Co., 1987, 8vo, pp. xv, 238, illus., \$29.95.

A good study of the practice of medicine in the early nineteenth century would be a welcome addition to the literature. Unfortunately Carl Pfeiffer's book on this subject does not qualify for the position. Certainly the organization of the work looks inviting. Rather than dividing the subject into Paris, London, hospitals, etc., it has chapters on electricity, vaccination, obstetric practice, and bathing, among other subjects. Professor Pfeiffer also seems to have looked at a large number of original sources. However, it all amounts to little more than a jolly romp through the past, comparing obsolete knowledge with our own. The text is frequently also sloppy, containing numerous errors of fact and spelling combined with inaccurate dating and stylistic infelicity: see the description of Laennec's career (p. 70) for all of these. At times, the cavalier approach to sentence structure and meaning invites the ingenious reader to construct a variety of stories from the text. For instance, on page 10 Professor Pfeiffer reveals that "Human anatomy was well developed prior to 1800".

JOHN C. GREENE, *American science in the age of Jefferson*, Ames, Iowa, Iowa State University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. xiv, 484, \$24.95 (paperback).

This lovingly-researched and elegantly-written portrait of American science in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has been produced by one of the doyens of the profession. Although medicine and technology are explicitly excluded from John Greene's brief, many of his principals are medical men in their extra curricular activities. Thus, David Hosack, Benjamin Smith Barton, Benjamin Waterhouse, and John C. Warren take their places among such native American *savants* as Benjamin Silliman, Charles Peale and David Rittenhouse, and such transplanted ones as Joseph Priestley. Presiding over them all is Thomas Jefferson, who "dramatized the advancement of science" to intellectuals in the young Republic. Despite the long shadow of Old World science, many individuals in the New World strove to make their marks in the variety of fields, from astronomy to anthropology, which Greene surveys. They also established such institutions as the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Academy of Natural Sciences, which provided visible settings for the pursuit of natural knowledge. Greene's narrative does ample justice to its broad subject.

YOSIO KAWAKITA (editor), *History of diagnostics. Proceedings of the 9th International Symposium on the Comparative History of Medicine—East and West*, Osaka, Taniguchi Foundation, Division of Medical History, 1987, 8vo, pp. x, 231, [no price stated].

The heterogeneous collection of essays in this volume cover, with varying degrees of competence, an array of subjects. The authors take in, among other things, Chinese pulse diagnosis, Greek medicine, Thomas Willis, the test tube, gout and uric acid and the modern

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Ayurveda. For the most part they are well done. The problem is that neither collectively or individually do the authors question their historical object. They nearly all assume that there is a thing, diagnostics, with sufficient continuity through time for it to have a history. Only one author, Guenter Risse, calls this assumption into question. In 'A shift in medical epistemology: clinical diagnosis, 1770–1828', he briefly threatens to confront the serious methodological problems of treating current and past practices as though they were devoted to the same enterprise. But even he grasps the nettle to let it drop. The shift which he identifies he characterizes as "the gradual adoption of ever-new and more precise criteria for the characterization and identification of disease" (p. 139).

SIR CHARLES ILLINGWORTH, *There is a history in all men's lives*, Blanefield, Heatherbank Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. 125, illus., £6.00 (+ 50p p & p, available from Tenovus-Scotland, 234 St Vincent Street, Glasgow G2 5RJ).

Sir Charles Illingworth will be known to many readers of this journal as the author of William Hunter's "autobiography", published more than twenty years ago. He has now (approaching his 90th year) turned his autobiographical attention to himself, or more precisely, to some of the people that he encountered during the surgical career which culminated in his appointment as Regius Professor of Surgery in Glasgow. This engaging volume contains memorable character sketches, some fascinating anecdotes on medical education early in this century, and a good deal of wisdom. Profits from the sale of the book go to Tenovus-Scotland, the medical research charity which Sir Charles helped to establish.

THOMAS NEVILLE BONNER, *American doctors and German universities. A chapter in international intellectual relations, 1870–1914*, Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1987, 8vo, pp. ix, 210, £22.75.

Bonner's study, originally published in 1963, has now been reissued in an unchanged edition. It is a short book on a big and important topic, and while it has not been superseded by any book which focuses exclusively on the impact of German educational ideas on American medicine, there has been a good deal of recent work on aspects of the topic. It is a shame that the publishers did not prevail upon Professor Bonner to write a concluding chapter, assessing this scholarship and reflecting on how his own pioneering monograph might be modified or extended by it.

HARRIET RITVO, *The animal estate. The English and other creatures in the Victorian era*, Cambridge, MA, and London, Harvard University Press, 1987, 8vo, pp. xi, 347, illus., £14.95.

Continuing where Keith Thomas's *Man and the natural world* left off, Harriet Ritvo offers an agreeable survey of the meaning of the animal kingdom for the Victorians, stronger on intriguing information than on analysis (some may find her style occasionally twee). Chapters are devoted to stock breeding, the development of prize pet shows, anti-cruelty movements and the impact of evolutionism. Medicine, vivisection, and moves to curb or abolish it receive a few mentions, but it is big-game hunters, zoos and prize pekinese which claim pride of place.

J. L. TRAINER, *The doctors of Kelso. A history of medical care in the town and district*, Printed by Martins of Berwick, 1987, 8vo, pp. 47, illus., £2.50 from Dr J. L. Trainer, Edenside Road, Kelso.

This little booklet recounts some of the medical history of this Scottish town, which had a dispensary as early as 1777 and a population almost as big at the time of the first census as at the most recent one.