

Book Reviews

MAJOR GREENWOOD, *The medical dictator and other biographical essays*, with an introduction by Austin Bradford Hill, London, Keynes Press (British Medical Association), 1986, 8vo, pp. xviii, 137, £40 (UK)/£43 (overseas).

Major Greenwood, the first name being his family Christian name and bearing no military significance, was drawn unwillingly into medicine by his father and trained at the London Hospital. With no desire to practise, he moved through physiological research and a mathematical training at University College to the natural conclusion, a career in medical statistics. He first worked at the Lister Institute of Preventive Medicine, and when the Ministry of Health was founded after the First World War, he was appointed medical officer in charge of statistics. In 1928, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, and was soon appointed the first professor of epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene, to which was later added Tropical Medicine, where he stayed until his retirement in 1945. The introduction to this book, written sensitively by Austin Bradford Hill, one of his protégés, depicts an erudite investigator, "the sceptical and somewhat frightening exterior, the interior a sensitive and generous heart."

Greenwood's classical education at Merchant Taylors' School and his wide reading fed his lifelong interest in medical history and particularly historical epidemiology. Being fluent in French, German, and Latin with little interest outside work and his library, he was ideally equipped to study and lecture on the history of ideas. His book *Epidemics and crowd diseases* was based on these lectures. This book, *The medical dictator*, contains a series of essays, several of which were adapted from papers previously published elsewhere. It was first published in this form in 1936. The subjects are some of his medical heroes, Galen (The Dictator), Friend, Latham, Farr, Louis, Osler, and his own friend Arthur Bacot. Their philosophies and writings interested Greenwood, especially when they discussed statistics and epidemics, but he thought that "Not one of them was, in the popular sense, a great man".

Galen and Hippocrates are discussed, and there is regret that a better understanding of Galenic thought could have led to "a rational therapy of emotional disturbances hundreds of years sooner". Friend's character and prose is praised, but his scientific pretensions dismissed. The essay on Latham seems to be a vehicle to further Greenwood's views on medical education, and, as expected, for Farr there is nothing but praise. Louis' numerical method is applauded, and the warm realistic essay on Osler contains the regret that he did not apply himself to rejuvenating the historical collection in the library of the Royal College of Physicians. Lastly, there is a warm tribute to the entomologist, Arthur Bacot, who did so much for the comfort of man through his work on the biology of fleas, lice, and *Rickettsia*.

This book is a delight to read, and, unlike so many slim volumes of essays, well worth reprinting and reading fifty years after the first publication, as secondhand copies are not readily obtainable. The writing is clear and straightforward and frequently contains sentences that make you stop, reflect and promise yourself you will remember. This is the kind of book that the fine presentation of the Keynes Press, in spite of the high price, does so well.

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E. S. LEEDHAM-GREEN, *Books in Cambridge inventories: book-lists from Vice-Chancellor's Court probate inventories in the Tudor and Stuart periods*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, 8vo, 2 vols., pp. xli, 649, xii, 861, £150.00 the set.

The libraries of non-eminent persons remain a little-known area only sporadically explored. In extracting and editing this mass of material from probate inventories, of which little has been published hitherto, Dr Leedham-Green has opened the way for a systematic study of the book collections of members of the Cambridge academic community in the early modern period. The first volume contains transcripts of book-lists from inventories of the goods mainly of scholars of the sixteenth century arranged chronologically by date of inventory. The stocks of five university stationers provide a context for the private collections, demonstrating that many of the books could have been bought in Cambridge and reflecting the demand for standard texts in