

Book Reviews

KENNETH DEWHURST (editor), *Richard Lower's Vindicatio: A defence of the experimental method*, Oxford, Sandford Publications, 1983, pp. xxxiv, 313, [including facsimile], £25.00.

Lower's vindication of Thomas Willis's *Diatriba de febris* (1659) against the attack of the Irish physician Edmund O'Meara (in *Examen diatribae Thomae Willisii . . . de febris*, London, 1665) is an important work in its own right. Lower was among the vanguard of new physiological theorists and in this short work he went beyond his brief for the defence of Willis. The *Vindicatio* (1665) was written at a time when physiological theory was developing apace as a result of Harvey's discovery of the circulation, Descartes' mechanistic attempts to explain the workings of the body, and the increasing sophistication of the new experimentalism. Lower here brings all these developments together, first summing up the current position and then taking it a little further by way of a prelude to his own major contribution, the *Tractatus de corde* (London, 1669). The *Vindicatio*, therefore, is a highly succinct and forceful account of some of the most exciting ideas in early modern medicine and Dr Dewhurst and his publishers are to be congratulated for providing this excellent new edition. As well as Dr Dewhurst's introductory commentary and notes, the reader has the benefit of a highly competent translation by Leofranc Holford-Strevens. The translator has responsibly chosen to provide a very literal translation. Although this does not always read perfectly smoothly for the modern reader, the meaning is usually clear enough and the confusing or solecistic passages reflect revealingly upon Lower himself and not upon Mr Holford-Strevens. Dr Dewhurst's 'Introduction' and 'Epilogue' place the *Vindicatio* in its context as part of a polemic about medical theory and practice. The opening salvo by O'Meara and the subsequent defence of the Irishman against Lower by Conlan Cashin (in *Willisius male vindicatus*, Dublin, 1667) are ably summarized. There are only two significant faults in these summaries and the annotations. The first is a failure to describe and analyse adequately the heavy emphasis on *logic* of Lower's two antagonists. O'Meara and Cashin repeatedly object to the notions of Willis and Lower respectively on grounds of inadequacies of definition and logic. Dewhurst points these out but he does not provide the modern reader, usually even more ignorant than Lower of "the tight conceptual framework of scholastic logic" (p.xxi), with much help in understanding the traditionalist approach. Second, and perhaps more important for understanding Lower's arguments (rather than O'Meara's or Cashin's), Dewhurst might have provided a more detailed exposition of the crucial concept of "Cartesian fire" and the provenance and role of "nitrosulphureous ferments" in Lower's thought. Here, though, the reader does have the benefit, as Dr Dewhurst points out, of Robert Frank's discussion in *Harvey and the Oxford physiologists* (Berkeley, 1980). These shortcomings do not seriously detract from what are, after all, only brief accounts of this important polemic. In presenting this new edition, Dr Dewhurst has enabled Richard Lower to speak for himself once again. We must thank him for that.

John Henry
Wellcome Institute

SIR GORDON WOLSTENHOLME (editor), *Lives of the Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians (Munk's Roll)*, Oxford and Washington DC, IRL Press; vol. 6: 1966–75, 1982, 8vo, pp. xi, 505, illus., £25.00; vol. 7: 1976–83, 1984, 8vo, pp. xi, 646, illus., £35.00.

The appearance of two new volumes of *Munk's Roll* in such quick succession might alarmingly suggest that the plague had broken out in the College's fine building in Regent's Park. Happily, this is not the case, the volumes resulting from the increased number of Fellows and from the prompt publication of the latest volume, recording obituaries of Fellows dying between 1976 and 1983. Indeed, so up to date is this particular supplement that it includes a life of S.T. Anning (d. 9 November 1983), whose last article appeared in the October 1984 issue of this journal.

Book Reviews

William Munk (1816–98) wrote the first three volumes during his long tenure as Harveian Librarian to the College, and that policy has been reverted to here, except that Sir Gordon Wolstenholme has edited rather than authored these latest offerings. In fact, after Munk, authorship has always been multiple, though some attempt has been made to standardize the style and format of the individual entries. For the first time, authors have been identified at the end of each life. Also new is the reproduction of a photograph of most of the Fellows included. In some cases autobiographical reflections (which Fellows are encouraged to deposit at the College) have aided their obituarists, who, in any case, write from personal knowledge. Inevitably, this has given the entries a more casual, eulogistic air and the lives tend to be heavier on anecdote than analysis. Rather too many are described as “One of the most outstanding physicians of his time”, and a few of the many rhapsodically happy marriages mentioned might actually have been more ordinary. Nevertheless, there are occasional touches of sharpness: one Fellow “expected complete loyalty and hated criticism”. Another made “no major contribution to knowledge”. A third was “notorious for her alarmingly dangerous driving”.

The usefulness of *Munk's Roll* is indisputable, and these volumes will make handy reference books and easy, if somewhat melancholy, bedside reading. Some of the entries are exceptionally good (e.g., W.S. Peart on Sir George Pickering) and the works as a whole convey a picture of hospital medicine in Britain during the past few decades, through the lives and careers of the 751 Fellows detailed here. So much easily available biographical information makes prosopography irresistible. Do eminent doctors live longer now than they did a century ago? Are they elected Fellows at an earlier or later age? What are their educational backgrounds? These and a host of other questions might be researched from a complete set of *Munk's Roll*. My own random sample (probably statistically insignificant) of twenty Fellows elected about a century ago gave an average life expectancy of Victorian Fellows (elected 1868–70) of 77.8 years, and an average age at election of 44 years. Their colleagues dying 100 years later lived an average 74.5 years, and were 55.6 years old when elected to Fellowship. Although fewer, Victorian Fellows enjoyed their Fellowship for much longer than do Fellows today.

Although about the dead, these volumes are full of life and affection. There are, however, a few curiosities, such as the life of Ida Macalpine, whose son (Richard Hunter) is also, sadly, included. We are told that Ida Macalpine possessed a “collection of incurabula” relating to King George III—presumably these were prophetic documents.

W.F. Bynum
Wellcome Institute

MIRIAM SLATER, *Family life in the seventeenth century. The Verneys of Claydon House*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, 8vo, pp. x, 209, £10.50.

STEVEN OZMENT, *When fathers ruled. Family life in Reformation Europe*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983, 8vo, pp. x, 238, illus., £14.85.

Since Edward Shorter and Lawrence Stone brought the subject into focus nearly a decade ago, the history of the family has become a prominent arena of controversy, and the battle lines are now deeply divided. Both Shorter and Stone argued that, in the early modern period, amongst the lower orders marriages had more to do with forming working economic units than with romance, and that amongst the propertied classes unions were essentially alliances of line, estates, and politics. Upper-class marriages were generally arranged, and considerations of affection between bride and groom were at most secondary, and even viewed with suspicion. Indeed, before the age of the Enlightenment, there was little love, or even tenderness, lost in the repressive, patriarchal regime of the traditional family, where wives were under the thumbs of husbands, and children subordinate to the dominion of their parents. Critics of Shorter and Stone have rejoined, on the contrary, that this bleak picture of unhappy, if instrumental, families, is belied by evidence, both personal and literary, and by common experience of human nature. Linda Pollock, for example, in her *Forgotten children* (Cambridge, 1983) draws attention to warm and caring relations between offspring and