

Book Reviews

The London: A Study in the Voluntary Hospital System, Vol. II: The Second Hundred Years, 1840-1948, by A. E. CLARK-KENNEDY, London, Pitman Medical Publishing Co., 1963, pp. 298, 78 illus., 50s.

In this volume Dr. Clark-Kennedy completes his fascinating narrative of the London Hospital. It could well be described as a pageant of London life, for the history of this hospital is a history of the London docks and slums with their merchants, street vendors, urchins and passers-by, of the poor and destitute and of patrons and royalty, all skilfully woven into the chronicle of hospital events and into the biographies of its worthies. But it is also the history of an important hundred years of poverty and depression and of peace and war. It is too the history of British medicine of the time, for few hospitals can equal 'the London' in its wealth of professional leaders.

Episodes such as the fantastic battle of Sidney Street, the gruesome business of Polly Nicholls and 'Dark Annie', the nightmares of air raids and the great 'flu epidemic of 1918 are realistically described together with the stories of Barnardo, Grenfell, Morell Mackenzie and Edith Cavell (this last of particular value because of the included recollections of Miss E. B. Wilkins) all of whom were proud to be 'Londoners'. The recommendations of Lord Cave's Committee and the far-sighted proposals embodied in the Dawson Report are wisely brought in because they are sufficiently distant to have been forgotten by, or even unknown by, the doctors of today. The history of nursing from the time of the Fry Sisters until Miss Lückes was appointed Matron in 1880 at the early age of twenty-four, of convalescent homes, of the various medical and surgical specialities, and of the development of the Medical School since its inception in 1780 all make fascinating reading. Tribute is paid to the memory of devoted apothecaries and to four X-ray martyrs and also to Queen Alexandra for her initiative in introducing the Finsen lamp treatment of lupus into this country. For the historian, the value of the book would have been enhanced by the inclusion of more dates, perhaps in footnote form so as not to spoil the pleasing continuity of this story: this particularly applies to events peculiar to the London Hospital that one would not expect to find in reference books. One would have welcomed too a list of dates of appointment and retirement of the consultant staff.

The outstanding story is of the long and fruitful partnership between Miss Lückes and Sidney Holland, later Lord Knutsford. This remarkable matron impressed on her pupils that nursing was more than a profession: it was 'high art'. To be certain of keeping in touch with her overworked charges she circulated newsletters setting out her objectives and reiterating her teachings; she signed them always 'Your affectionate friend and matron'. It was a time of expansion and Knutsford, her constant champion, was the person who more than anyone else towards the close of the nineteenth century foresaw the rapid development of hospitals and the importance of their proper administration. Perhaps the most touching tribute to this great hospital and its great chairman was when the escorted *Victoria and Albert* steamed into the bay at Mull with King Edward VII, convalescent and grateful after the successful drainage of his appendicular abscess. He had called in to invite Knutsford, whom he knew to be holidaying there, on board so as to discuss his plans for the hospital.

Finally mention must be made of the delightful reminiscences of Sir Hugh Lett prepared especially for this book. He tells of his chief who, refusing to own a telephone, had perforce to be summoned to hospital by a porter sent in a cab; of another chief who used gold-plated spencer wells for his private patients, and who journeyed to

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hospital from the West End in his motor car with another following behind in case of a breakdown; and of another chief, whom he accompanied on the occasion when the vehicle was stopped in order that the policeman on duty at the Mansion House might receive his half-crown Christmas box.

Throughout this volume, as with the one which preceded it, the author has made full use of published reminiscences, and by adding others, such as those of Sir Hugh, he has produced a colourful and human story. History is in essence the story of people and the impact they have made on their fellow men and on their environment. Medical history is no exception, and by abiding by this tenet one can with confidence hail this history of the London Hospital as a classic of medical literature.

W. H. MCMENEMEY

A History of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, 1654–1963, by J. D. H. WIDDISS, Edinburgh and London, E. & S. Livingstone, 1963, pp. xii, 255, 40s.

The low standard of medical practice in Dublin, as far as is known, was first publicly commented on in 1619 by Dermot O'Meara, whose son Edmund, also a physician, subsequently became an Honorary Fellow of the London College of Physicians. A year earlier (1618) Paul de Laune, brother of Gideon who had so much to do with the incorporation of the Society of Apothecaries in 1617, obtained the Fellowship of the London College and about 1622 left for Ireland where he became physician to Lord Deputy Falkland. It is not perhaps surprising to find him associated with O'Meara and three other physicians in an approach to the London College in the summer of 1626 seeking information about its constitution and government, for about that time Charles I had given his blessing to a plan to set up in Dublin a College of Physicians modelled on that founded in London just over a hundred years earlier. Why this plan failed is not clear; and thirty-six more years were to elapse before a Society was established that was to have any continuity.

More than once in this history reference is made to the absence of original records of the College until we reach the nineteenth century. This lack has obviously imposed a severe handicap on Dr. Widdiss in the production of his book, in which incidentally, although there are several references to the London College, the initial approach in 1626 is not mentioned.

The loss of nearly all the earlier documents is attributed to the fact that the College had no permanent home until 1863. How its own Hall was eventually obtained is told in a chapter, more than half of which is about Dominic John Corrigan, through whose exertions and in whose Presidency a permanent home was secured. This biographical approach is prominent throughout the book and is revealed in the heading of some of the chapters, as c. 5 'Lucas, Ould, and Molyneux'; c. 11 'John Cheyne'; c. 12 'Graves and Stokes'; c. 14 'Osborne to Kirkpatrick'.

An interestingly written history, this book falls a little short as a work of reference. The author's sources are given in the bibliography on pp. 245–7; unfortunately they are not always identified or easily recognized in the text. The index is selective in that, for example, it gives only one reference to 'Dun's Book' (p. 14), but a more explicit reference to what it is (on p. 34) is omitted. The College changed its title to Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in 1890, but no mention of this change could be found in the index. A few misprints were found (e.g. 'Clive' for 'Cline' on p. 137, and 'co-called' for 'so-called' on p. 164) which may be presently corrected.

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