

Book Reviews

R. A. Cohen of Warwick. It is an elegant production, and while one is grateful to the publishers for making available the original text of the first work on dentistry written in English, its price is undoubtedly high.

There are only two known copies of the 1685 edition, one is in the library of the College of Dentistry at New York University and the other is in York Minster, and from the latter the present facsimile has been taken.

After the death of Robert Davies (1793–1875), who had been Town Clerk of York, his widow presented a collection of valuable books to the library of York Minster and among them was a copy of the 1685 edition of *The Operator for the Teeth*. In 1868 Davies had published a list of books printed by John White of York which included *The Operator for the Teeth*, but surprisingly medical and dental historians were unaware of the existence of this edition until a description of a copy then belonging to Dr. Theodor Blum appeared in the American press in 1931.

It is perhaps the fascinating story of the confusion surrounding the three editions of the book, so admirably unfolded by Mr. Cohen in the introduction, which will make the publication of this facsimile most welcome to dental historians. The second edition of *The Operator for the Teeth* was issued in Dublin in 1686, and the third edition with the title, *Curious Observations in that Difficult Part of Chirurgery relating to the Teeth* was published in London in 1687.

The introduction represents many years of diligent research by its writer, and it is a matter of regret to him that it has proved impossible to find any real information about Charles Allen himself. 'Operator for the Teeth' was the title then used by dentists who held appointments to the Royal family. After Allen's name on the title-page is 'Professor of the Same', and this phrase has in the past given rise to some discussion. It was merely meant to imply that the author followed the same profession as operator for the teeth.

The treatise itself is a slight affair. It is not easy to be sure for whom it was intended. The poem seems to be directed at the public, whereas the advertisement at the end of the book appears to be addressed to such gentlemen as were inclined to practice the art of dentistry.

The anatomy of the teeth and jaws is dealt with in an elementary fashion, the causes of 'the Tooth-Ake, looseness of the Teeth, and the decay of the Gums' are explained in an ingenious manner, but little practical advice is offered on how to treat these conditions. The final section of the work is devoted to children's teeth but it is no more concise than the preceding sections, although it does contain one pertinent piece of advice 'that in drawing the old, or sucking tooth, a great care is to be taken not to hurt the new one lying under it.'

J. E. MCAULEY

Volksmedizin. Probleme und Forschungsgeschichte, ed. by ELFRIEDE GRABNER (*Wege der Forschung*, Band 63), Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967, pp. viii, 575, illus., DM.60.

The roles played by folk medicine (practised among the people) and school medicine (handed down in written form at universities) changed in the course of the centuries when folk remedies were written down in herbals and other compilations, and

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scholastic medicine became antiquated and its remains lived on among the people as superstitions and under such guises as dream books and astrological calendars. How the frontiers between these two branches of knowledge changed, were blurred and redefined is shown in Paul Diepgen's contribution *Die Volksmedizin und wissenschaftliche Heilkunde* of 1936.

The main theme running through this imposing collection of articles by specialists, published previously in less accessible form, is the attempt to determine how much of folk medicine is and has been valid or at least helpful. The term 'folk medicine' is here extended from the use for European rural communities to those overseas and of the past. Several articles stress the modern discovery of biochemical action confirmed in herbs recognized by ancient and 'savage' healers. Other authors attempt a demarcation of the part played by suggestion, faith and social organization in the cures effected by shamanism and exorcisms. One of the most arresting articles is that by Herbert Fischer on *Heilgebärden* 'healing gestures'. With the aid of works of art, in small but good reproductions, in different cultures during different periods, and of field work, the healing symbolism of various attitudes of fingers and hands is shown. To the student of Eastern religion and Chinese, Tibetan and Indian theories of physiology, this is the tip of a vast iceberg not touched upon by Fischer but awaiting exploration. This example shows how the book under review is of interest to many besides the medical historian, e.g. the art historian, the legal historian, the ethnologist, anthropologist, and the student of psychology and comparative religion.

There are three indices: of persons, places and subjects; but the Hindu, Greek and other gods often mentioned in the text cannot be found in either index. But this is small criticism of a veritable treasure trove.

MARIANNE WINDER

Prelude to Fame: Crawford Long's Discovery of Anaesthesia, by RUBY L. RADFORD, Los Altos, California, Geron-X Inc., 1969, pp. 175, illus., \$4.95.

The story of the introduction of surgical anaesthesia into medical practice is a sad one due largely to the bickering which took place over the honour for the discovery. There is little doubt that the major stimulus to its widespread use was Bigelow's report in 1846 of Morton's use of ether at the Massachusetts General Hospital on 16 October of that year.

Several years earlier, Crawford Long, a general practitioner of Jefferson, Georgia, had used ether for a minor surgical procedure and continued to use it occasionally. However, he failed to communicate his results to the profession at large and so forfeited what would otherwise have been a unique place in medical history.

This book describes the life of Long. It is written primarily for young people and, as such, it is of little value to the medical historian or the serious reader. Miss Radford is a native of Georgia and her Southern loyalty is evident not only in her views of Long's place in the history of anaesthesia, but also when discussing the civil war and the abolition of slavery.

Prelude to Fame is pleasantly written, but it is unlikely to have much appeal for readers of this journal.

NEIL MCINTYRE