

Book Reviews

A. WEAR, R. K. FRENCH, and I. M. LONIE (editors), *The medical Renaissance of the sixteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, 8vo, pp. xvi, 350, £35.00.

When planning their 1983 conference on renaissance medicine, the editors of this volume had in mind not so much to repeat the traditional picture, which portrays the achievements of a few great figures, as to investigate the typical theoretical and practical concerns of medicine, which, as they rightly remark, are far from well known. The revised papers of that meeting together introduce what is beyond doubt a new phase in the investigation of renaissance medicine. It is their great merit to show that in this medicine the medieval heritage was not thrust aside: its theoretical approaches, certainly in method and to a certain extent in its emphasis on the transmission of a text, demanded scholastic training, and in practice the Arabic authors continued further unchallenged. But at the same time the renaissance physicians not only consciously strove for a new beginning and a reformation in medicine, but also succeeded in bringing it about. The thesis of Huizinga and Diepgen that saw the Renaissance as one part of the declining Middle Ages is here finally refuted. One must look at the medical reformation in all its complex contradictions, e.g. its relationship to the authors of the Middle Ages did not always remain unaffected by the revival of the Classics, but was reformed in a critical way by new knowledge of its inheritance from Antiquity.

The book opens with an extraordinarily profound and substantial preface by the editors. It is followed by an interesting study, by Charles Schmitt, of the part played in Italian medical education by Aristotelian philosophy; the history of medicine and the history of philosophy cannot here be separated. Next, Nancy Siraisi and Roger French look at traditional influences on the new medicine, the *Canon* of Avicenna, and Berengario da Carpi's dependence on scholastic method in his confrontation with his anatomy text. Then in an essay that is well worth reading Vivian Nutton investigates humanist surgery, showing (p. 77 ff) that, contrary to general belief, the influence of Celsus on this new surgery is hardly perceptible. While Richard Palmer continues his earlier studies on Venetian medicine with a typically careful analysis of Venetian pharmacy, Andrew Wear looks at practical medicine and pathology. His intention of seeing one disease and its treatment in various authors is particularly apt, since he can review in brief all the developments in descriptions of disease. His choice of vertigo is equally well made, since the occurrence of this condition and its relationship to other diseases was already well described in Antiquity. His single citation of Galen, VIII.201–204 K. should have been supplemented by XVII B.611, 677 K., CMG V.9.1, 307–308, and by Aretaeus III.3 and Caelius, *Morb. chron.* I. 51–52. His description of the ancient sources, p. 131 ff., would thus have been fuller, and he would certainly not then have ascribed to Avicenna ideas that were already widespread in Antiquity. The next essay, by Gerhard Baader, brings a welcome breadth by looking at the dietetic writings of Jacobus Sylvius in their social context, and shows how medicine was interested in social problems and reacted to them with the means at its disposal. The concluding articles, by Iain Lonie on the Paris Hippocratics, by Andrew Cunningham on the Paduan anatomy project, and by Jerome Bylebyl on the renaissance debates on the pulse, are of fundamental importance, not just for their presentation of new details, but because they document with telling examples the renaissance idea of medical progress. Unfortunately, Linda Richardson's study of Fernel and diseases "of total substance" is somewhat inadequate as a treatment of this eminently interesting problem, for which an understanding of the general primary and secondary literature on ancient and medieval pharmacology is essential if one is to place the renaissance arguments on this theme in their proper setting. (Cf. G. Harig, *Bestimmung der Intensität im medizinischen System Galens*, 1974; *idem*, *NTM* 10, 1973, 764–81; M. R. McVaugh, *Arnaldi de Villanova Opera medica omnia*, 1975, II, p. 62). Her system of citation of Galenic works is hard to follow, cf. especially note 8, p. 327, as it lacks any cross-reference to the Greek. The volume closes with Luis García-Ballester's piece on Morisco medicine in sixteenth-century Spain, which extends his earlier important studies and expatiates upon the social reasons for the decline of a once brilliant Arabic medical tradition in Spain.

Book Reviews

The value of these essays is further enhanced by a careful index of names. Less convenient is the placing of the notes at the end of the book, which makes for a constant turning of the pages. This small complaint may also show how little in general the reviewer had to find fault with in such an important book.

Georg Harig
Institut für Geschichte der Medizin
Humboldt University, Berlin

CHRISTOPHER BROOKE, *A history of Gonville and Caius College*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 1985, 8vo, pp. xvi, 354, illus., £19.50.

Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, has been fortunate in its historians. The mighty volumes of Venn's *Biographical history*, Venn's slighter college history of 1901, and more recent studies of its early admissions register (1559 onwards), have all contributed to making the College crucial to our modern understanding of the development of Cambridge over the centuries. Professor Brooke's new history is more than an offering of academic (and, indeed, filial) piety, for his survey always seeks to place the College in a broad intellectual and social context. Only with this century and the growth of University and, still more, government control over Cambridge education does the history become more parochial, even if that parochiality does take us from ancient China and medieval numismatics to the economics of aid to the Third World, and beyond, to black holes in space. Professor Brooke's account is further enlivened by his own reminiscences as the child of a Caius fellow, by sidelights on some generations of eccentrics and oddities, like the leave of absence given to Edward Wright for purposes of piracy, and by judicious comment on the present academic situation.

Much attention is given to the development of the Caius medical tradition, from Thomas Wendy and John Caius to the 1970s, when the percentage of its members reading medicine was by far the highest in Cambridge. At a time when Masters were usually clerics, Caius several times elected medical men, most notably Caius himself, and Matthew Brady, and, in this century, Hugh Anderson and Joseph Needham. Although Professor Brooke emphasizes the College's long links with medicine, the evidence for a strong tradition of medical instruction within the College is not substantial before the second half of the last century, and in this both Paget and Allbutt may have had a greater role than is here allowed them.

The great value of the book, for the general historian, however, resides in its earlier chapters. The author's deep acquaintance with medieval habits of thought enables him to give a coherent account of the first founding of the College, and his Anglican sympathies enable him to understand, if not entirely to pardon, the vigorous controversies that affected the College in the century after its refoundation by John Caius. He is surprisingly generous to Caius (although he underestimates his scholarship, on which see *Med.-hist. Journal*, 1985), and his description of Perse, Legge, and Gostlin is a brilliant vignette.

Occasionally, though, the outsider would like more information on the Caius arcana. Only a passing sentence notes the great wealth of the College (perhaps the third or fourth richest in Cambridge), but no figures are given, and one is left to guess at the consequences of this bounty in the provision of scholarships and fellowships. Occasionally, also, there are signs of hasty revision, most notably over the marital status of R. D. Willis (cf. 203 and 224), but Professor Brooke has successfully picked his way through the minutiae of identifying long-forgotten Caius and their progeny.

To a Cambridge man, not at Caius, this history is refreshingly free from most faults of the genre, and Professor Brooke has shown himself a worthy successor to the inimitable Venn.

Vivian Nutton
Wellcome Institute