

### Book Reviews

common people', in other words almost anything commonly accepted and practised. This is fair enough, but before medicine became scientific how, in this day and age, can we separate folk-lore from orthodox practice? The beliefs and customs of the past are so numerous that it is impossible to make a complete collection, and any attempt to do so must result in an unreadable jumble. The study of folk-lore is important for many reasons; there can be no proper understanding of life in medieval England or in any other period without a knowledge of the customs of the common people, and not of the common people only. The study of folk-lore, as Tylor showed a hundred years ago, can reveal striking affinities between places far apart and these must be taken into account when studying culture and communications between peoples. Some customs are common to peoples whose languages spring from different roots. Out of folk-lore was born empirical medical practice. Professor Forbes prefers to consider the customs of the past as superstitions, irrational beliefs and fears. In this book it is these which he describes with a wealth of detail and copious references. In this he has done uncommonly well and has produced an intriguing book on the customs surrounding conception, pregnancy and confinement. He has not set out to produce a complete history of witches and midwives, but has chosen those facets of the subject which interest him most. In so doing he has avoided losing himself in his subject as so many in the past have tended to do. For the most part he lets the facts—if superstitions can be called facts—speak for themselves and does not attempt to draw inferences from them.

It is his last two chapters which are the most important for the medical historian and are most satisfying. These describe the early rise of the midwife from the woman whose only qualification for the work was the personal experience of many childbirths, to a professional person, or at least a woman skilled in her art. In the final chapter he has collected together much original material on the licensing of midwives.

Professor Forbes devotes an interesting chapter to pregnancy and fertility tests and another to the prediction of sex. The superstitious uses of the caul are described in a chapter on 'the veil of good fortune'. One of its most popular uses was to prevent sailors from drowning and shipwreck. The caul was always preserved and fetched a price on the market which fluctuated in England according to whether a war was being waged or not, varying from thirty guineas in 1779 at the beginning of the Napoleonic wars, to as little as one pound in 1895.

There is much little-known information in the pages of this book but its lasting use for the historian will be the wealth of references which it contains. These are important and will be of help to all those who wish to study the, as yet, neglected subject of the early history of childbirth and the rise of midwifery.

R. M. S. MCCONAGHEY

*Ärzte und Medizin in Afrika*, by LUDWIG BRANDL, Pfaffenhofen/Ilm, Afrika Verlag, 1966, pp. 200, illus., DM. 9.80.

Although Germany was a late starter in the race for Africa, the Dark Continent nevertheless exercised its spell on those Germans who went there whether as conquerors or civilizers. This small paperback of 200 pages is one German's testament to

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the influence of Africa upon him, as well as to his desire to further the cause of mutual understanding between western nations and the newly-emerging African states.

In his foreword the author does not forget to pay tribute to the British Museum and the Wellcome Historical Medical Library. He begins with an account of pre-historic times, followed by a review of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Arabian and European medicine. There are numerous illustrations of fair quality and some good maps dealing with such topics as the location of doctors up to 1917 and the university and health institutes after the Second World War. There are also lists of hospitals and Egyptian doctors since A.D. 641—beginning with Paulus von Ägina.

There is a surprising absence of a table of contents and an index, despite some sixty pages of references. There are also a few mis-spellings e.g. 'Encyclopedia' and 'E. Ashwoorth Underwood' (p. 139). Nevertheless the book can be recommended as a compact introduction to an intriguing subject.

I. M. LIBRACH

*Medical Education: The Queen's-Rutgers Experience, 1792-1830*, by DAVID L. COWEN, New Brunswick, New Jersey, State University Bicentennial Commission and the Rutgers Medical School, 1966, pp. vii, 54, gratis.

There was a parallel fermentation in medical education in the United States and in England at the turn of the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries, of different obvious causation, but probably due to the same intellectual and emotional growth, following the Independence of the United States and the French Revolution. This is a very interesting account of one such attempt in New York. The same enthusiasm among doctors, the same pooling of resources and display of individual initiative is common to both sides of the Atlantic, but the Americans had the disadvantage of having no diploma-giving authority comparable to the Society of Apothecaries, and had, in consequence, to persuade universities to co-operate. They showed a more robust, raw and crude line of behaviour than the English did (or did not disguise their intentions so well). In addition there was more personal antagonism between doctors and less professional spirit in America than in England. But the story of the troubles of two great and remarkable men and their persistence in disaster has a human as well as a professional interest.

CHARLES NEWMAN

*Geschichte der medizinischen Fakultät. Die Frühgeschichte 1665-1840*, by HEINRICH SCHIPPERGES (Geschichte der Christian-Albrechts-Universität Kiel 1665-1965), Neumünster, K. Wachholtz, 1967, pp. 188, illus., no price stated.

This part of a history of Kiel University published on the occasion of its third centenary covers the time from its comparatively late foundation up to the period of strictly scientific medicine (1840-1965) for which a separate volume is to follow. In the present volume the prevalent ideas, chief personalities and social conditions are discussed; facts are well documented, and, best of all, particular attention is paid to the syllabus during different phases of the life of the faculty. In the middle of the eighteenth century it had to be temporarily closed down because part of the university building had collapsed. The illustrations are good, there is a long list of sources and a name index, but a subject index would have been helpful for quick reference.

MARIANNE WINDER