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with over a hundred prescriptions. It is the earliest extant medical text in Hebrew of European origin, and the earliest Italian medical text. Donnolo is said to have been concerned with the founding of Salerno, and wrote extensively and most importantly on cosmology. The latter established Donnolo as a Byzantine Jewish scholar, and this study of him and his world illuminates the culture and relations of Byzantine Jewry. It also provides information on the most opaque part of medical history, the Byzantine period (pp. 94–110). In addition to a detailed and well-documented survey of his life, times, and writings, nine texts on cosmology are reproduced in Hebrew.

As tenth-century medicine was closely allied with astrology and cosmology, there are references to it throughout, and Donnolo's cosmology was compounded of mystical Judaism, Christian culture, and Arabic astronomy. Thus Sharf's excellent book will be greeted enthusiastically by a wide variety of scholars.

HELNY ALSTERMARK, *Das Arzneibuch des Johan van Segen*, (Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholmer Germanistische Forschungen, 22), Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell, 1977, 8vo, pp. 177, illus. (1 facsim.), Sw.kr.53.00.

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This is a pharmacopoeia of 1487 printed from MS medic. XII 114 at the Royal Library, Stockholm, written in Low German, with some Central German admixtures. It contains 547 prescriptions, generally divided according to the medium in which the medicines were to be administered, such as plasters and ointments. Occasionally a head to foot arrangement seems to start but soon peters out again. There are also a few paragraphs on bloodletting and urinoscopy and pieces of advice on how to protect oneself against the plague. From the arrangement, the introduction, and the commentary it is clear that this is a compilation from earlier sources. Apart from the Introduction on the manuscript and its sources (6 pp.), there is a study of Johan van Segen's language and the forms used by the scribe against the background of the dialects of the time (14 pp.). There is a Commentary comparing each prescription with versions by other authors or compilers (20 pp.). The text itself comprises 90 pp. Finally, there is a glossary translating fifteenth-century Low German and Latin words into modern German (30 pp.), and a useful bibliography (6 pp.). The manuscript must have been referred to by practitioners when in doubt, but as the glossary is a modern addition by the editor it must have taken the doctor a long time to find the right remedy unless he became very familiar with the text.

HENRY K. BEECHER and MARK D. ALTSCHULE, *Medicine at Harvard. The first three hundred years*, Hanover, New Hampshire, University Press of New England, 1977, 8vo, pp. xv, 587, illus., [no price stated].

The aim of this book is to present an assessment of the contribution of Harvard Medical School to medicine from its establishment to 1782 up to 1965. Thus it is concerned more with the sequence of outstanding individuals working in it rather than with the institution itself. Using the criteria of innovation, leadership, the

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quality of its students, and the records of its graduates, it is clear that Harvard has played a most significant role in the development of American medicine. Having brought European medicine to America, it became and remains a centre of excellence.

This is readily verified by observing the work of the men who have made this enviable reputation possible. The book is divided into three chronological phases: the earliest stage comprising the School's first eighty years of existence; 1869 to 1909, dominated by Charles William Eliot, President of Harvard University, who viewed the Medical School during its first period of existence as "a sort of trading corporation as well as a body of teachers"; from 1906, during which time Harvard became one of the most renowned schools in the world.

The galaxy of fame displayed by the authors is staggering, a sequence of men who were not only brilliant teachers but also research workers of international repute. A brief selection would include Waterhouse, the Warrens, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Bigelow, Bowditch, Shattuck, Theobald Smith, W. B. Cannon, Reid Hunt, Folin, Enders, Minot, Christian, and Cushing. A list of the School's graduates is equally impressive.

In the most recent period of history, from 1906, the narrative is divided into medical specialties, this being the only satisfactory method of handling the large amount of material. Throughout there is adequate documentation and the text is eminently readable. The School will be proud to have such an excellent record of its faculty, the only sadness being the fact that the senior author, Dr. H. K. Beecher, its distinguished Professor of Anaesthetics, did not survive to see the book's publication.

SALLY SMITH HUGHES, *The virus: a history of the concept*, London, Heinemann Educational Books, (New York 8vo, Science History Publications), 1977, pp. xix, 140, illus., £3.90.

An enjoyable little book, tracing the nineteenth-century background to rational ideas on the nature of infectious agents, where it covers much the same ground as William Bulloch's classic *History of bacteriology*. Based on a London University thesis, it then moves on to a very thorough discussion of the relative merits of the works of Ivanovski and of Beijerinck on tobacco mosaic disease, and of Loeffler and Frosch on foot-and-mouth disease, for the formation of the concept of filterable viruses. To justify the somewhat sweeping title of the book, Dr. Hughes has added a chapter purporting to follow the further development of the virus concept in the twentieth century, which has the appearance of having been put together perhaps a shade too hastily.

The latter period is also summarized in the form of a very long table which would be useful were it not marred by omissions and a few inaccuracies. Thus it is surprising to find Dr. Hughes crediting Lode and Gruber with "discovery" (in any case a strong term in the circumstances) of the virus of fowl plague when it is clear from a number of the papers she quotes (including the one by Lode and Gruber themselves) that Centanni reported the outbreak of fowl plague, and the filterability of its agent, to sessions of the Academy of Medicine and Science at Ferrara in March and April of 1901, and that similar observations were made by Maggiora and Valenti at Modena