

Book Reviews

succeeds in conveying to the reader his own warm interest in the sturdy individualists who were fighting psychiatric battles a hundred and fifty years ago. The first third of his book deals with the physicians of the late eighteenth century; the rest with three men of considerable stature—John Haslam, James Cowles Pritchard, and John Conolly.

AUBREY LEWIS

Arzt der Tyrannen, by ARTUR SWERR, München, Süddeutscher Verlag, 1961, 420 pp., DM19.80.

There are two main methods of biography—one factual, the other fanciful. The latter consists of choosing a personage, preferably famous, or even more preferably, pre-Christian or early Christian, and weaving a romantic story around him, or, less likely, her. Nowadays, a sexually attractive or lurid cover on a paperback is an essential if the less discriminating reading public is to be tempted into buying or even sometimes reading it! As recent examples, *Spartacus* and *Ben-Hur* come immediately to mind. The Americans can be regarded as the major exponents of this ever-increasing trend in their efforts (however well intentioned) to spread 'literacy' throughout the world.

This book is a good example of the German contribution. As the blurb inside the cover says—'... it is a colourful and serious novel of ancient times, filled with adventure, history and a yearning for the purity of the soul!'

It concerns Democedes of Croton (550–460 B.C.), who practised as 'Stadtarzt' in Aegina, where he successfully dealt with an epidemic of Plague, acted as personal doctor to the tyrants—Peisistratos of Athens, Polycrates of Samos, and the Persian King Darius—the mightiest man of his time; how he married the daughter of the famous athlete Milo, how he lost her and his children and fled to Platea near Athens ... and so on'. It is 420 pages long, and is pretentiously divided into five papyri instead of chapters.

Peter Ustinov has written that nobody can fully guess at the comportment or mentality of, for example, the average Roman. Once he is given small talk he sounds modern, since it is impossible to conceive of ephemeral banter in any but our own idiom. This is very true of books such as this and is their greatest weakness.

The Torch is a similar novel by Wilder Penfield. It is based on the life of Hippocrates. In his introduction Penfield, in a spirit of self-abnegation, says '... it is reassuring for a surgeon to know that although failure in the literary field may cause indigestion or even loss of sleep, it is not apt to be followed by a funeral!' Maybe this is just as well for the author of this book.

I. M. LIBRACH

Great Ideas in the History of Surgery, by LEO ZIMMERMAN, M.D. and ILZA VEITH, Ph.D., London, Baillière, Tindall, and Cox, 587 pp., 115 illus., £6.

It was a good if not a great idea which originated in the minds of the authors when they decided to compose this book, which is put together in a novel way. The whole field of surgical history is surveyed and is grouped into nine parts or sections, each of which comprises accounts of a group of men representative of the surgery of that particular period. Extracts are also given from the works of the most notable of them so that the reader obtains first-hand information as to certain important elements in their teaching and practice.

The first section, called 'The Beginnings', includes a brief account of surgery in

Ancient Egypt, in India, in Greece, Rome, and Alexandria, and extracts are given from the writings of Hippocrates, Celsus, Galen, and Paulus Aegineta, and from the Indian *Sushruta Samhita*. We wish that the extracts from Galen might have been supplemented by some autobiographical passages from his 'Prognostics' or 'Passions'. The second section discusses Arabian surgery and gives passages from the writings of Albucasis. The third section exhibits the 'Early Stirrings' in the general lethargy of the 'Dark Ages' and we are told about Salerno and its influence, about Mundinus and the revival of dissection, and about the sound but at that time heretical views held on the treatment of wounds by Theodoric and Henri de Mondeville. The last-mentioned gives a most unusual reason for his remaining a bachelor—'out of fear that the perversity of a woman and the necessity of paying her expenses and furnishing her a home would divert my spirit from the composition of this book'.

Next follows the section headed 'Surgery becomes respectable' which begins with an account of Guy de Chauliac, includes John Arderne, Benevieni, and Paracelsus, and finishes up with Pierre Franco and Ambroise Paré—an interesting but non-descript group, with many stimulating extracts from their varied writings.

The fifth section contains several German surgeons, some well known and some of minor importance, and two Italians of note. The account of Caspar Stromayr is particularly well illustrated. The Italians are Tagliocozzi and Fabricius ab Aquapendente. There is a discrepancy between the length of life, and the dates of birth and death of Fabricius (pp. 230 and 233). In the sixth section the authors describe six British surgeons of note, starting with William Clowes in Elizabethan times and continuing with Peter Lowe, Richard Wiseman, William Cheselden, Percival Pott, and John Hunter—an excellent group.

With them is included that remarkable man, Lorenz Heister, who perhaps might have been more appropriately included in the previous section.

The last three sections are devoted respectively to the great pre-Listerian surgeons, Lister himself, and the group of great men who immediately followed Lister. Marion Sims is included among the pre-Listerians but he certainly adopted antiseptic methods towards the end of his career. Lister is rightly given a section to himself but this might with advantage have been a little longer. The authors underestimate the number of years that Lister used the antiseptic spray; he was already using it in 1871 (see *Brit. med. J.*, 1871, i, 30). The 'great ideas' of the last fifty years are not included. They may need another volume.

The book is well illustrated and well produced and, unfortunately, good production costs more. It is the kind of book, however, which should be available in general as well as medical libraries.

ZACHARY COPE

The Natural History of Quackery, by ERIC JAMESON, London, Michael Joseph, 1961, 224 pp., 25s.

The history of unorthodox medicine is one which has yet to be told. Many have touched on the subject, chiefly using illustrative stories of famous quacks to enliven their descriptions of medical practice. These often make intriguing reading, as those acquainted with Jeaffreson's *Book about Doctors*, Everitt's *Doctors and Doctors*, and the more recent work by E. S. Turner *Call the Doctor*, will readily agree. But what was a quack? How much influence did he really wield? Did he not fill a need when no regular practitioner was to be had?