

## Book Reviews

nineteenth century, but Coleman points out that British and American public health reformers were far more willing to call for bureaucratic regulation as a social remedy than were Villermé and his French colleagues. Where Britain, for example, began as early as 1802 to legislate in order to control the employment of children in factories, France did not introduce such a law until 1841 – and even then this law was “the first major and for long years the only piece of French labor legislation” on the books (p. 253).

Coleman’s chief concern, as he indicates in his introduction, is with the ideology behind the public health inquiries carried out by Villermé and his associates in France. In simplest terms, that ideology consisted in the two-fold conviction that the application of science to social problems offered guidance for human progress but that only the workings of individual initiative could bring that progress about. When the findings of Villermé’s science seemed to indicate that state regulation of working conditions might be necessary to remedy social evils, Villermé recoiled before this contradiction. Rather than constrain individual liberty in any way, he chose to offer the worker only the counsel of patience, diligence in his or her labours, and the hope of better things to come – either in this world (with the gradual increase in national wealth through increased production) or in the next (with the promise held out by religion for a reward to the deserving in the afterlife).

Coleman ably discusses the methodological strengths and weaknesses of Villermé’s studies, their theoretical underpinnings and preconceptions, and the sociocultural environment in which they were carried out. His work is a useful and opportune contribution to the history of both medicine and the social sciences – and especially to the history of their interaction.

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ARNOLD S. TREBACH, *The heroin solution*, New Haven, Conn., and London, Yale University Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xvi, 331, £16.95.

The history of narcotic drugs, like the history of Irish nationalism, is seldom written dispassionately. There is simply too much at stake. Given the enormity of the problem of narcotic drugs in Europe as well as America, and the current fluctuations in policy, it is nearly inevitable that advocates will marshal history to support their positions. There is nothing wrong with that. If history is written intelligently, it *should* illuminate present problems.

Professor Arnold S. Trebach is an American who is thoroughly familiar with drug policy and practice in both Britain and America. This book is a persuasive argument for fundamental changes in narcotics laws and treatment patterns of drug addicts. His suggestions are sensible and humane. They do not emanate from an ideological commitment, nor do they flow from a detailed and professional study of the past. Rather, Professor Trebach has picked from the history of narcotic drugs in Britain and America pieces of evidence to support his argument.

Professor Trebach is a liberal reformer. He thinks generally that Americans have wrongly tended to deal with narcotic drug addiction as a criminal problem rather than as a medical issue. Punitive laws against drug-takers must be pared back. Physicians must be given full professional responsibility to deal with drug addicts as they would any other patients. The physician must have a full range of options at his disposal, including the continued use of narcotics: “But the ideal for any modern society should be the availability of a complete range of treatment services for those addicts who want to take advantage of them – temporary heroin therapy, temporary methadone therapy, therapy with any drug that has a low risk of causing organic damage, psychiatric treatment, therapeutic community, detoxification, religious guidance, and meditation, as well as any other types of assistance and support that might be devised in the future” (p. 285).

Professor Trebach’s reading of history is shaped by this reforming position. For example, he characterizes the reign of Harry Anslinger as director of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (1930–1962) as a disaster. Anslinger saw “dopers” as criminals, pure and simple, and used his powerful position to toughen narcotics laws. Yet history also provides alternatives. In particular, Trebach holds up the British Rolleston Committee Report (1926) and the American municipal drug clinics, especially the one run by Dr Willis Butler in Shreveport, Louisiana

## Book Reviews

(1919–1923), as models of wise policy and sensible treatment. They can, and should, function as beacons for contemporary reformers.

I have a few quarrels with Professor Trebach. I do not think that the British experience with narcotic drugs is as applicable to America as he does. And I think that his view of the past tends to be too narrowly legal. But these are minor reservations about a splendid book. While this is not a history book, it contains a great deal of good history. And the uses that Professor Trebach makes of the past are, like his book as a whole, intelligent and humane.

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JOHN FRY, LORD HUNT OF FAWLEY, and R. J. F. H. PINSENT (editors), *A history of the Royal College of General Practitioners. The first 25 years*, London, MTP Press, 1983, 8vo. pp. xiii, 270, illus., £9.95.

This book consists of twenty-two independent chapters by a variety of authors, documenting the development of different aspects of the Royal College of General Practitioners over the last twenty-five years. These chapters cover topics from the College's formation to a history of the College insignia, and most have been written by College luminaries who were personally involved in the events they describe. On the one hand, this proximity of its authors to recent events provides a very readable book with much fascinating, if at times trivial, background detail. On the other hand, this intimate acquaintance with events has precluded a more distant – and perhaps more critical – assessment of the College's first twenty-five years.

It might be expected that participants in the College's history would be able to offer unique insights into events, and yet perhaps one of the most remarkable things about the book is the absence of private observation. The College, of course, was founded at a time when such events were part and parcel of the public domain, whether in the correspondence columns of medical journals or in the College's own formal records, so that, for example, in the history of the College's formation very little is added to what is available for all to see in the columns of the *Lancet* and *BMJ* at the time. What new detail is provided tends to describe where dinner was eaten or who provided it: this enriches the narrative but is hardly of historical importance.

This is very much a history of individual accomplishments. The authors themselves achieved and personally knew others who achieved. There was an obvious camaraderie between these people, but it means that the history of the College is one of gifted and prescient men (and a few women) who fortuitously came together and gave birth to a College. There is some hint of controversy and opposition in the chapters on the College's formation, but otherwise conflict is a theme noticeably absent. Indeed, even those who opposed the College tend to be shadowy, nameless people; when they are named they are members of the medical establishment such as Brain, Wakley, and Horder – though even they are reported to have joined the angels by renouncing their opposition once the College was formed.

The other effect of a "great men" approach is the total neglect of the socio-political dimension. General practice seemed to exist in a vacuum and the GP Charter, the British Medical Association, the government, the National Health Service, or the social climate receive barely a mention. There is undoubtedly a history of general practice in the post-war years to be written, but this is not it. On the other hand, to be fair, neither would it claim to be: as the dust-jacket proclaims the book is a "reminder" that will lead the reader "to be entranced". If this is not a good history, it is certainly an excellent celebration.

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WILLIAM REY ARNEY, *Power and the profession of obstetrics*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xi, 290, £20.00.

In the literature on the "medicalization" of women's health care over the last three centuries, two issues have emerged: why did it happen, in the sense of whether the doctors who "gained control" were fiendish schemers or well-meaning humanitarians?; and what consequences did it have for the women themselves? Have they overall been gainers or losers from the shift of