

Book Reviews

Anesthesia from Colonial Times: A History of Anesthesia at the University of Pennsylvania, by JAMES E. ECKENHOFF, Montreal and Philadelphia, J. P. Lippincott; London, Pitman Medical Publishing Co., 1966, pp. 95, illus., 35s.

The history of a great clinical, teaching and research department mirrors in its development that of the speciality which it embraces. This little book traces the use of anaesthesia at the University of Pennsylvania from the early tentative days, through the ether v chloroform controversy, to those when a few far-sighted men—a surgeon or two, and a handful of pharmacologists—laid the foundations upon which modern anaesthetic practice is built. Disappointments there were: surgeons on the whole appear unsympathetic. In 1938 ‘nurses had administered most of the inhalation anesthetics for the previous 30 years, surgeons gave all spinal anesthetics . . . and the Bronchology Department inserted all the tracheal tubes.’ Since the war, however, advance has been progressive and great.

Professor Eckenhoff gives an interesting account of these developments. W. P. C. Barton, whose *Dissertation . . . of Nitrous Oxide Gas*, 1808, followed the line of Davy’s observations, was Professor of Botany. Benjamin Rush gave lectures on ‘clinical gases’. Though Crawford Long was a graduate (1839), his indifference to his discovery was almost paralleled by his University, and to some extent by America as a whole, where ‘etherization’ till the end of the century was regarded as hardly worthy of a qualified man. A few names stand out, none more so than Horatio Wood, Professor of *Materia Medica* 1862–93, who left a lasting mark on anaesthesia. The experimental tradition in the department stems from him.

Late advances—and setbacks—are sketched in, and a bibliographic list (from 1943) of 309 titles shows the magnificent contribution made from this renowned department by such pharmacologist-physiologists as Carl Schmidt, Julius Comroe and Robert Dripps, to whom the book is dedicated.

K. BRYN THOMAS

Pharmacology at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, by CHALMERS L. GEMMILL AND MARY JEANNE JONES, Charlottesville, University of Virginia, 1966, pp. 134, ports., \$3.00.

Materia medica, direct ancestor of pharmacology, began to be taught at the University of Virginia in 1825 when Robley Dunglison, contracted as the first medical professor, arrived from London. From that date until 1945 when the current professor and co-author, Dr. C. L. Gemmill, was appointed, it is surprising to find that the chair has been held by local men who apparently were never exposed to the influence of the Buchheim-Schmiedeberg school. It is generally acknowledged that this influence was due to the work of J. J. Abel who trained most American pharmacologists of the last generation and was responsible for the growth of pharmacology in the U.S.A. The biographical account of the eleven professors at Virginia’s Medical School, embracing their background, training and teaching aims, portrays clearly the pattern of evolution during the last century of a branch in the medical sciences which enjoys considerable prestige. Everyone interested in education and pharmacological training must read this book in order to appraise the educational results of

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different teaching methods favoured in the same medical school by successive staffs. The mark left by the teacher upon the student body has been studied with particular care by the authors, as also the changing balance between research and teaching programmes. For those unfamiliar with certain links between European and American pharmacology in the last century and the role played in recent years by the pharmacological industry, it would probably have been desirable to offer an introductory chapter analyzing those events and their bearing, if any, on pharmacology at the University of Virginia.

F. GUERRA

The Development of Medicine as a Profession, by VERN L. BULLOUGH, Basel, S. Karger, 1966, pp. viii, 125, S.Fr./DM. 29.

This is an interesting little book, beautifully produced and printed, and written by a man who has published several articles in American journals about aspects of medicine in the medieval period. In fact, apart from the catchpenny title, which is not justified by the contents, the book is really a résumé of the material he has published previously. Briefly it is an outline of medical history covering primitive cultures, Greek and Roman medicine, but weighted heavily on the medieval side. Surprisingly it does not touch the Arabic tradition, except *en passant* when Constantinus Africanus had to be mentioned, nor has it any reference to the Roman *collegia*. Some of his remarks show too great a reliance on secondary sources, for consultation of the original texts would have shown him, for instance, that Monderville used thirteen, not fourteen diagrams, in his book on surgery; that Bernard Gordon is not merely 'believed' to have written towards the end of the thirteenth century, but dated all his separate works exactly with day, month and year; and that 'dry healing' did not predominate, but was eliminated by the reactionary teaching of Guy de Chauliac. These are just a few of the many points that more careful investigation could have rectified. On the whole, however, the book serves a useful purpose and should be welcomed by those who wish to have a simple and straightforward introduction to medical development during the Middle Ages.

C. H. TALBOT

Descriptive Catalogue of the Pathological Series in the Hunterian Museum of The Royal College of Surgeons of England, Part I, Edinburgh and London, E. & S. Livingstone, 1966, pp. xii, 288, illus., 84s.

John Hunter's memorable collection has suffered many vicissitudes—not least, the insensate bombing of the museums in Lincoln's Inn Fields in May 1941.

In this magnificently produced catalogue there is expert documentation of a rich selection of surviving specimens; they illustrate Hunter's opinions on the nature of diseases, experiments, and observations on cases in surgery. Hunter was no ordinary man and this is no ordinary catalogue. He always had something to teach and in these pages there is an astonishing amount to be learned. Many of the 429 illustrative specimens have descriptions in Hunter's own words, which enhances their value. The knowledge possessed by Miss Jessie Dobson of the writings attributed to the maker of this unique collection, has been brought to bear on the interpretation of original sources.