

Book Reviews

any formal qualifications prior to the demonstration with ether is also confirmed.

Interweaving the traditional story with his new information, Wolfe leads the reader through a very different tale of the introduction of ether by a man not conditioned by scientific training and lacking in moral principles. The notion is raised that it was Charles T Jackson who put the idea for the use of ether into Morton's mind, and that on the same day came its first use on Eben Frost in Morton's surgery. The possibility of the use of nitrous oxide for the painless fitting of false teeth, and the financial benefit that this could bring to his dental practice, originated by Horace Wells, was not lost on Morton. He persevered, found success with ether, and sought to patent the concept so as to benefit commercially from the sale of licences. Failing to make the expected profits, he applied to Congress for financial reward. This resulted in a twenty-five year long marathon, during which his dental practice declined. For a time he became a successful farmer, but the purchase of land, bought, as in his youthful business enterprises, with borrowed money that he could not repay, ultimately led to financial disaster.

Tarnished idol provides a rich insight into the interplay of personalities and circumstances of the "ether controversy", and much material about the nature and behaviour of the various characters. One example of their interaction occurred during Morton's second appeal to Congress. This was the sensational trial of a Harvard professor, John White Webster, for the murder of one of Harvard's benefactors, George Parkman. The victim's dismembered remains were found in the privy in Webster's office. The verdict relied heavily, for the first time on record, on the forensic dental evidence, given by three people deeply involved in the ether controversy, Charles T Jackson, Nathan C Keep and William Morton. Since they were on opposite sides, Morton was able to use this as an opportunity to take revenge on Keep

for the dissolution of their partnership some three years earlier. Wolfe surmises that Morton was paid handsomely for his participation.

It may be felt that Richard Wolfe is overly critical of Morton and his character, in comparison with his gentle handling of Jackson, whose duplicitous behaviour is also susceptible of serious criticism; but with regard to Morton, as the rich tapestry of events and people, of opportunism and disappointment, unfolds throughout the book, regardless of any sympathy he may feel, the reader is bound to be left with the impression of a "tarnished" rather than a "fallen" idol.

Neil Adams,
West Suffolk Hospitals Trust

Vincent Barras and Micheline Louis-Courvoisier (eds), *La Médecine des lumières: tout autour de Tissot*, Bibliothèque d'Histoire des Sciences, Geneva, Georg, 2001, pp. x, 358, SFr 50.00 (paperback 2-8257-0704-X).

This collection of essays is the outcome of a 1997 conference commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Swiss medical professional's death. It brings together a wide variety of interpretations and perspectives on Samuel-Auguste-David Tissot and the larger context of Enlightenment medical knowledge. Born in 1728, Tissot did not rise to fame due to his scientific discoveries or new theories, but rather for his diagnostic skills called upon by the élite of Europe and his popular treatises, most importantly *Avis au peuple sur sa santé*, re-edited countless times and in many languages after its publication in 1761.

But, as this collection demonstrates, Tissot was also intimately involved in a European circle of enlightened medical professionals, part of an epistolary republic

Book Reviews

of letters, shown clearly by Laurence Brockliss and Eric Hamraoui. As well as corresponding widely with his contemporaries, Tissot has left us with abundant source material on the patient/doctor relationship. His detailed diagnostic letters as well as the patients' requests allow historians, such as Frédéric Sardet, Philip Rieder and Vincent Barras, to examine eighteenth-century conceptions of therapy, treatment and patient/doctor interactions.

Though Tissot was renowned for his epistolary diagnoses, other essays in this collection show that he was well aware of the usefulness of physical examinations. In his overview of eighteenth-century anatomical pathology, Othmar Keel argues that, despite the continued dependence on Neo-Hippocratic and humoral theories, doctors such as Tissot began, when possible, to depend on examinations in their diagnosis. Tissot also kept up to date with new discoveries in physiology and pathology. His own treatise on nerves was an important contribution to a Europe-wide debate on the irritability of nerves, discussed here by Hubert Steinke and Urs Boschung. Tissot defended fellow physicians Albrecht von Haller and Johann Georg Zimmermann who posited that nerves could be irritated, even after death, questioning the animist theory that linked movement to the soul and siding firmly with the vitalists. Alain Cernuschi's analysis of acoustics and music in Tissot's *Traité des nerfs* provides an unusual take on this important text.

This collection also contains a series of broader articles, meant to situate Tissot in his milieu. That by the late Roy Porter examines the conception of progress in British medical science; a subject that seems only tangentially linked to Tissot and has been poorly translated into French. More successful is Matthew Ramsey's essay on the tensions between a liberal English medical model that stressed the education of the patient and the paternalist German model that put all medical knowledge in the hands of trained and government approved

specialists. In his work, Tissot adopted an amalgamation of both models. Articles on Swiss medical healers and the history of male obstetricians illustrate the world in which Tissot practised.

This collection, strangely, does not address directly some of Tissot's most famous works. His *Onanisme* of 1760 is hardly mentioned, and his discussion of hygiene for the people mostly ignored. Since these works have been discussed elsewhere, the articles here focus primarily on his letters, less well known tracts, and personal relationships. Because these short articles come directly from conference presentations, some subjects are covered only cursorily while others are given repeated coverage. Overall, this collection provides some perceptive glimpses into Enlightenment medicine, but those unfamiliar with Tissot's legacy will need to turn to early biographies.

Morag Martin,
University of Warwick

Ann Bradshaw, *The nurse apprentice, 1860–1977*, The History of Medicine in Context, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001, pp. ix, 267, £45.00 (hardback 0-7546-0172-2).

Bradshaw seeks to set the record straight and break with a historiography of nursing that she believes has downplayed the vocational tradition in the development of the nursing profession and the motivations of individual nurses. In doing so, she traces in (often meticulous) detail the apprenticeship model of nurse training from the establishment of the Nightingale school in 1860 to the creation of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors (UKCC) in 1979. Apprenticeship is shown to embody the Nightingale ideal; a style of training that represented a moral, intellectual and practical approach. It was one seen to equip