

Book Reviews

RENATE WITTERN, *Die hippokratische Schrift De Morbis I*, edited, translated and explained (Alturtumswissenschaftliche Texte und Studien, Bd. 3), Hildesheim and New York, Georg Olms Verlag, 1974, pp. cxxxii, 249, DM.48.

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This is a valuable addition to the series of new editions of Hippocratic texts which have been coming out of Germany and France in recent years. Originally prepared as a doctoral dissertation, it is primarily concerned with the establishment of a text and critical apparatus: introduction and commentary are therefore mainly confined to the discussion of textual matters. There is a German translation, with valuable notes on the meaning of Greek medical terms (Dr. Wittern avoids question-begging translations into modern terminology), and three indices.

The text has not been edited since Littré (1849) and the even less accessible edition of Ermerins (1862). Yet it is an interesting text for the historian. Dr. Wittern argues (p. lxxii ff.) that the book is esoteric, designed for use within a particular circle of physicians and intended to provide a basis and rules for the professional discussion of doubtful cases and their treatment. This interpretation makes better sense than previous ones; if right, it suggests a quite conscious enlistment of new physiological doctrines and new logical techniques in support of professional confidence. Historians concerned with other periods may find parallels here.

The medical historian whose interests are not primarily linguistic is sometimes inclined to doubt the value of new editions of ancient texts. But modern editions of Hippocrates, as well as being more accessible than that of Littré, are also more correct: we simply know more than Littré knew about the relation of the medieval manuscripts to their archetypes, and as a simple consequence of this advance in knowledge, without any undue interference by an editor, a modern edition of Hippocrates will differ in detail from Littré. By how much? The reviewer has counted approximately 190 differences from Littré's text (excluding dialectical and orthographic differences), or approximately three and one-half per page of Littré. About one-quarter of these (forty-five) would show up in translation, and twenty-two make, in the reviewer's estimation, a substantial difference to the meaning.

RUTH MATHESON BUCK, *The doctor rode side-saddle*, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1974, 8vo, pp. viii, 9–175, illus., \$8.95.

Elizabeth Matheson (1866–1958), one of Canada's first woman doctors, practised in the Territory of Saskatchewan from 1898 to 1918. Her remarkable life story is recounted here by her daughter in a lively and engaging style. In addition to the problems of the primitive medicine she practised, the terrain in which her practice lay, sex discrimination, the winning of friendship with the Cree Indians, amongst many others, she managed to have a family of nine children, and then lived to be ninety-one.

This moving account contributes substantially to the history of Canadian medicine and of women in medicine, as well as providing details of life in Canada's Middle West in the early part of the present century.