

Book Reviews

the papyri, or perhaps the quantitative aspect of the Egyptian materia medica could have been pointed out with more vigour, because it is accepted that papyrus prescriptions carry for the first time the idea of dosage. However there is no doubt that the author in this respect offers enough evidence to convince us that Egyptian drugs had considerable influence on classical Greece and Islam.

The epigraphic sources show, once more, their limitations in providing accurate or clear information; but this is in the nature of the material. Illustrations of hernias, malformations, possible surgical instruments and the like, suggesting something of the wealth of medical material to be found in the monuments, should be interpreted with caution. Such pictographic representations have been responsible for the interpretation of eye mutilations as cataract operations and other similar misinterpretations.

Ghalioungui declared early in his book that he intended to fill a gap between the scholarly monographs on the papyri and those manuals where Egyptian medicine fluctuated between the summit of intellectual discovery and the depths of superstition. He has accomplished his task, and gone beyond it: for he points out that those who dare to pass judgement on four millennia of Egyptian medicine on the merits or demerits of just nine papyri and a few slabs are open to considerable criticism. And, above all, he destroys the cliché that Pharaonic medicine was a continuously enriched stream departing from the magic concept of pre-dynastic eras to produce the masterpiece of the surgical papyrus parallel to dynastic splendours. The paradoxical truth, that Ghalioungui has finally placed in focus, is that the papyri reveal ingredients of superstitions in latter days while more scientific values are found in the documents of earlier periods. Science, after all, did not come from Egypt in an ever-swelling flood.

FRANCISCO GUERRA

World Health and History, by W. HOBSON, Bristol, John Wright, 1963, pp. xii, 252, 45s.

It has become the custom to concede that preventive medicine is dull in the public eye: that it is far less easy to interest the man in the street in matters of public health than in curative medicine with its more solid and spectacular features. In consequence, opportunities of promoting health in this country are being restricted.

Dr. Hobson had this very much in mind when writing his book, which he calls an attempt to make the subject of preventive medicine more interesting than is usually the case. His experience in a wide field of public health work, civilian and military, at home and abroad, well qualifies him for the task. The work is addressed to politicians, administrators, doctors, students and the intelligent public: he may well have added health education officers, health visitors, schoolteachers and students, sound and television producers, and even the clergy.

There is a mass of information here which cannot fail to appeal to the lay reader, or provide the lecturer with the kind of material he needs to gain the attention of his audience. It may be complained that there are many places in this book in which the voice of the pedagogue drowns that of the medical historian, but is this to be deprecated in a work which has as its aim the health education of the public?

In planning his book the author must have had in mind a readership not confined to the British public (and it is hoped, confidently, that this will be the case) but unless this is clear to readers at home, some of the statements may be misinterpreted. The remarks about the reluctance of local politicians to carry out certain measures, and the way in which the public health law, if it exists, is usually ignored, must refer to the less-developed countries. It is hardly true to say, either, that many of our doctors

Book Reviews

and surgeons do not know that tuberculosis is a notifiable disease, or that most men in industry are not very intelligent.

Very wisely, Dr. Hobson has drawn many lessons from the medical histories of wars, and in particular of the Second World War, which was a triumph for hygiene and preventive medicine. He recalls the low standards of sanitation among the Axis troops in North Africa which contributed to their downfall. It must not be forgotten, however, that it was the unremitting activities of hygiene personnel in the months before Alamein that convinced the Eighth Army that hygiene was something more than 'slightly vulgar and faintly amusing'. Fly control was carried out effectively long before D.D.T. came on the scene. The fact that the invading army in N.W. Europe was 'the most healthy army the world has ever known' is proof of the way in which health educational lessons had been learned by the General Staff who planned the campaign, and the officers and men who took part in it.

The chapter on tuberculosis cannot fail to impress upon the reader the importance of this disease as a world problem. It will be seen that many countries are now struggling against an epidemic phase of phthisis, as we did for more than 200 years before natural causes, social betterment and organized control schemes began to tell. The public at home will learn of the contribution that B.C.G. and effective treatment can make to the eradication of consumption. References to the impact of tuberculosis on literature and art help to maintain the reader's interest. (It was in 1882, of course, not 1870, that Koch announced his discovery of the bacillus.)

The other chapters range far and wide over the whole field of preventive medicine, with a wealth of historical and epidemiological accompaniments which excite attention.

The book concludes with a plea for a new form of international co-operation for the elimination of disease and suffering, and the idea of world citizenship; at the same time, stress is laid on the need for more individual knowledge and responsibility. Well illustrated and attractive, this is a book which merits a large circulation.

H. D. CHALKE

Galen on the Passions and Errors of the Soul, translated by P. W. HARKINS) with an introduction and interpretation by W. Riese, Ohio State University Press, 1964, pp. 136, \$4.75.

This book offers the first English translation of two treatises by Galen based on the critical edition of Wilko de Boer in *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, Leipzig and Berlin, 1937. Dr. Riese supplies a short introduction to Galen and an interpretation of the treatises. Galenists will be grateful to have the text, which is particularly interesting for its autobiographical details, so readably presented and carefully analysed.

It is not so easy to follow Dr. Riese's claim that these treatises are 'contributions to that part of medicine known today as psychotherapy'. Much of the matter is mere midbrow moralizing like 'The education of children in some way closely resembles horticulture. For all his careful attention, the farmer could never make a bramble bush produce a bunch of grapes.' Hardly the sort of statement which requires the master-mind of the man who dominated medicine for fifteen centuries.

More striking perhaps is to read of the denial Galen imposed upon himself never to hit a member of his household with his hand, achieved not as a triumph of mind over matter, but learnt from the bitter experience of friends who had bruised themselves 'while striking their slaves in the teeth' bare-fisted. As his father rightly said, wait until you can get hold of a whip and then you may inflict as many blows as you wish with