

means that the wider context of medicine at Helmstedt is lost. Conring's defence of Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood, and the theses that he directed in furtherance of his ideas from 1640 to 1645, needed much more than passing mention, not least since the theses were neglected by Edwin Rosner, Michael Stolleis and, very recently, Roger French in their accounts of Conring's reception of Harvey. One finds little on the relationship between medicine and other parts of the university.

Bökel's anatomy lectures in 1585 were given to more than medical students, following the example of Wittenberg, and Caselius, Helmstedt's own Melanchthon, was using Galen's *Quod animi mores* in his lectures on Greek and on ethics in the 1590s. Much later, Lorenz Heister, professor of medicine, was involved in the initial stages of a theological dissertation by Heinrich von Allwoerden, *Historia Michaelis Serveti*, 1728. The wider concerns of the Meibom family are only hinted at in their short biographies, and even their medical importance is discussed but briefly.

A proper history of medicine at Helmstedt still remains to be written. What we have here is extremely valuable within its own limits, accurate, detailed, and accessible. But it is, as the title of its series proclaims, a *Repertory* of information, and medical historians of early modern Germany should be grateful for all the hard work that has gone into the collection and organization of this material.

Vivian Nutton, Wellcome Institute

F M G Willson, *Our Minerva: the men and politics of the University of London, 1836–1858*, London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ, Athlone Press, 1995, pp. xvii, 363, illus., £45 (0-485-11479-8).

Those academics vexed by the impenetrable fuzziness, interminable delays, and petty politics of today's universities can take some solace in this sobering account of the critical years in the making of London's "metropolitan

university". For more than twenty years, from 1836 to 1858, the well-meaning efforts to define a clear and broad mandate for the University of London were met with exasperating inertia and shifting political support. At stake were such issues as the place of Biblical Studies in the curriculum, the appointment of examiners for degrees, and the admission of its graduates to the privileges enjoyed by Oxbridge contemporaries. Fiercely fought were such matters as the graduates' demand for a role in electing senators as well as a presence in Parliament, and the explosive effort to allow those who had not matriculated from "approved" colleges to take university degrees.

In his Foreword, Negley Harte rightly describes the University of London as "a very strange institution, barely understood by insiders, incomprehensible to outsiders [that] . . . cannot be likened to any other institution" (p. xiv). As an outsider who has waded through many of the same records, I can only confirm the strangeness of an institution that did not teach but granted degrees; whose examiners were drawn from everywhere, it often seemed, except the local faculty; that owned no buildings; and whose authority did not extend over the two affiliated schools that did teach, University College London and King's College. It was, as a recent historian wrote in another connection, "a wonderful piece of British ad-hocery".

The struggle of these years was closely linked to the demands of Dissenters for full equality in higher education, and to the long campaign by general medical practitioners to bring reform to the medical profession. The Whig government's original decision in 1836 to ignore the privately funded "University of London" and King's College and to create an entirely new University of London owed much to the need to found an institution with power to grant degrees, without extending that power to all the hospital medical schools in the city. Against the strong opposition of the royal colleges of medicine and surgery, the University was given the right to confer degrees but, unlike Oxford and Cambridge, the degrees were not to be accepted as licences to practice.

No group took greater interest in the new venture, nor played a larger role, than medical men. "It is on the Medical Branch of the New University", wrote Henry Warburton, the indispensable figure of these early years, "that its success or failure . . . hinges" (p. 86). Some friends of the University even warned of the danger that it might become "exclusively medical" (p. 138). Throughout the 1840s and early 1850s the movement to grant medical graduates a licence to practice was stymied by the medical corporations, by preoccupied or indifferent government ministers, and by the wish of other universities to be included in the privilege. Not until 1854 were London graduates victorious in the fight to win equality with Oxbridge graduates. Four years later came the Medical Registration Act that ended a half-century of effort to bring some measure of order into the chaos of British practice.

One can only admire the diligence and extraordinary detail which the author brings to this account. Only the most interested reader will follow closely the almost day-to-day recounting of forgotten academic squabbles, including the records of attendance and votes at meetings, the agendas of committee meetings, and the detailed biographies of scores of players in the ongoing debates. But for the concerned scholar, the work offers an important, closely researched, retelling of the origins of the University of London.

Thomas Neville Bonner,
Wayne State University

Wolfgang U Eckhart and Christoph Gradmann (eds), *Ärztlexikon: Von der Antike bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich, C H Beck, 1995, pp. 439, DM/SFr 29.80 (3-406-37485-9).

Eckhart and Gradmann's book is the latest in a series of encyclopedias, covering various subjects (for instance the social structure of medieval societies or the history of craftsmanship), published by C H Beck. These encyclopedias aim to give a clear, informative overview, for the educated reader, not only for

specialized scientists. The *Ärztlexikon* fits very well into this general frame. The editors stress that they offer a quick approach to the contemporary state of knowledge and they justly identify biographies as an important part of the history of medicine in general. The criteria for adopting a certain person's biography are always difficult to define, particularly when there is only relatively limited space available. Eckhart and Gradmann focus on the main stream of academic physicians as far as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are concerned, for earlier periods (they go back to antiquity) they tried to select people who made significant contributions to the development of medicine, because modern standards of scholarship can not be applied there. They also included persons who achieved excellence outside medicine, but whose biographies are influenced by their medical education (for instance Arthur Conan Doyle or Alfred Döblin). The encyclopedia geographically covers all parts of the world, although most of the articles deal with the western hemisphere and culture. (This includes also the Near East, with the ancient centres of western culture, especially Greece, Egypt and the countries of the medieval Arab empire.) The selection process was done in co-operation with the seventy-one contributing authors, a very large group as far as editorial management and organization are concerned. Most of the authors are from Germany, two from Switzerland, one from Austria and one from Argentina and they constitute a very suitable set of already distinguished elder historians of medicine and younger scientists. All are academic scholars themselves. The biographies are generally very well written and the authors managed to include all basic and important facts in their texts, which are signed and never exceed two pages. Each entry contains a short bibliography of the more important writings of the person concerned as well as listing the literature dealing with him or her. The book also includes two appendices, one is a register of all the names mentioned in the articles, the other gives the entries in chronological order.