

Book Reviews

A History of The Royal College of Physicians of London, by SIR GEORGE CLARK, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964, pp. 425, Plates XIV, 55s.

Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution, by CHRISTOPHER HILL, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, pp. 333, 45s.

The almost simultaneous publication of these two works represents what may well be seen later as a turning point in the study of the history of medicine in this country. The contributions of professional historians in America to the history of science and medicine have been fundamental—one has only to think of Lynn Thorndike, O'Malley and MacKinney to appreciate how substantial—but in this country it has been generally avoided as a subject too esoteric for a general historian to handle with the same authority as he is able to give, say, to 18th century parliaments or civil war battles. With the increasing academic respectability of social history there have since 1945 been a few tentative explorations across the frontier which have stimulated a growing exchange of views between general and medical historians in Britain. Mr. Peter Laslett's work at Cambridge on demographic problems of 17th century rural England, with the valuable statistical information he is gathering on the effects of epidemics, harvest failures and starvation, are proving a guiding light to a younger school, but now two of the leading and senior historians of 17th century England present us with important works which must be seriously considered by any who attempt to follow them. Their works are discussed together in this review for they complement each other to a degree which must be rare indeed. If Sir George Clark and the new Master of Balliol had conspired in advance to present the two sides of the same medal they could not have succeeded more precisely. The ideological basis of all Mr. Hill's work is well known and he writes of the rebels and outsiders of Puritan England as if they were his daily companions. Sir George, on the other hand, undertook to write the official history of one of the most exclusive body of 'insiders' that has ever supported the authority of privilege in England. From its title, one would not suspect that Mr. Hill's book is one of the most stimulating contributions to the history of medicine and science in England that has been published for many years. He tells us disarmingly that he has deliberately emphasised a parallel with Daniel Mornet's *Les Origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française* and goes on to find the intellectual origins of the English revolution in the groups of mechanics, instrument makers, navigators, Paracelsian chemists and unorthodox medical practitioners who were to be found in England in the late 16th and early 17th century. Although there is no figure among them to stand against Montesquieu, Voltaire or Rousseau, Raleigh and Francis Bacon are given extended treatment in a context rather different from that in which they are usually considered. Mr. Hill's thesis might just as well have been *le trahison des clercs*, for it was by setting their faces against the new ideas in science, medicine and technology, now seen as one of the finest upthrust of ideas from below ever experienced in this country, that the universities of Oxford and Cambridge left the field open for London, where, writes Hill, 'any "mechanician" had access to a scientific education as good as any in Europe, and much better than that given in English universities and most grammar schools.' It was indeed a misfortune which troubled intellectual—and especially medical—progress for centuries that the proposals made at that time for the founding of a university in

London came to nothing. Yet the Inns of Court ranked with the finest law universities, and following the precedent of Bologna could easily have been joined by a Faculty of Medicine with the royal hospitals and their staffs as a basis. This development was one which the College of Physicians might well have fostered at any time from 1518 onwards had they not concentrated their energies on a disciplinary role which made them into a kind of primitive General Medical Council with little positive influence on medical education. That obtainable at Oxford and Cambridge was certainly no source of pride and a college restricted to members of either university had to lean heavily on foreign universities for the effective education of its own fellows. The first volume of Sir George Clark's *History* of the college is a model of its kind and the College is to be congratulated on obtaining the services of a historian of such distinction. It is beautifully written and, when one stops to recall the rather dry material on which it is based, it is surprisingly interesting. Only towards the end of a substantial volume does one begin to wonder whether the efforts of all these learned physicians might have been better employed in energetic action to better the education of the lower orders of the profession rather than in hounding them from their modest livings among the poor. Not that Sir George ever hints at any criticism of this kind; he states the facts, and the facts of course speak for themselves, in the long accounts of prosecutions and punitive fines which occupy such a large part of the *Annals* at this period. Linacre himself gave it the name of 'College', a title with an academic connotation; it could not help but be demeaned when it deliberately adopted the role of policeman, as well as judge, jury and even occasionally jailer. Of the more pleasant side of the College's activities, Sir George writes with wit and charm, emphasising the importance of the college in shaping the image of a learned profession, with all the good fellowship and social ritual which is now associated with it. What is particularly valuable too is to have the College history presented against a background which is sketched in with a masterly authority. It is my guess that this work will still be read and consulted fifty years hence but that Mr. Hill's will have been forgotten, even by those aging historians who were stirred up by it in their youth to examine the still unfamiliar scene he describes and have gone on to make their own names by the books which have superseded it. Of the one there is no more to be said but of the other there is much still to be discovered.

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Untersuchungen zu Aretaios von Kappadokien, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, by FRIDOLF KUDLIEN, Nr. 11. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, 1963, pp. 86, DM. 8.

A study devoted to Aretaeus, one of the most neglected of Greek medical writers, is always welcome. A major reason for this neglect, happily corrected by the volume under review, goes back to antiquity itself—he is mentioned by name by only a small handful of writers not all of whom can be precisely dated. Judging from the extant literary evidence, Aretaeus was virtually unknown to his contemporaries, both actual and presumed, even though his surviving writings seemingly suggest that he was a latter-day follower of the pneumatic tradition stemming chiefly from Archigenes. The analysis and validity of this traditional interpretation, supported in the main by Max Wellmann and his followers, forms, so to speak, the central theme of Dr. Kudlien's study. More precisely, the first of the two chapters (pp. 7–41) is devoted to establishing and dating the medico-historical background presupposed in Aretaeus' writings and in the few references to him. Chapter II (pp. 41–83), primarily philologi-