

and Fellow of the Royal Society, was told that his proposed biography was not an attractive prospect for publication because Lord Florey was not a household name. One London publisher even suggested that a biography of Fleming would be more appropriate. This rightly doubled the author's determination and he obtained grants towards the cost of publication by the Oxford University Press.

It is indeed a surprise and a scandal that Florey has been given so little credit for the discovery of the therapeutic value of penicillin. Macfarlane's book gives a dispassionate account of the rather sordid proceedings by which Fleming and various friends, some of them at St. Mary's Hospital, put about the idea that the clinical trials had been conducted there. Somehow it even came to be stated that penicillin was produced in London and sent to Oxford for trials, whereas in fact it went in the opposite direction.

It is important to have these sad perversions of the truth corrected. But the book does much more than this. It gives an absorbing account of the development and life of a fascinating personality. Florey's career was a success story from the start. He became a friend of great men such as Sherrington as soon as he arrived in Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. Departments in Cambridge, London, and Oxford competed to give him jobs. His experimental work continually prospered. Yet he had many difficulties. In spite of his success he was reserved, abrasive, and lonely. He had no personal friends and never used christian names. He was separated for years from his future wife Ethel, who continued her medical studies in Australia. The book gives a very valuable and sympathetic history of the various difficult phases of their relationship. There are quotations from the 150 letters that he wrote to her while they were apart.

The steps by which the clinical value of penicillin were established have of course been related before. But here is an account that is both well documented and highly readable. The author writes objectively although he admits that his aim is to establish Florey's claim.

The book begins with an elementary history of the work of Jenner, Pasteur, and Lister and the development of medical science in Oxford. The last at least is relevant since Florey was involved in the later stages, when Lord Nuffield's benefaction established a "priority of clinicians" (to coin a collective) which was not all to the taste of Florey and other pre-clinical professors.

The author is at his best when following a straightforward narrative, less happy in asides about the progress of the war and other matters. It is an exaggeration to imply that social life at Magdalen was only open to members "of the top four English public schools". But in the main Macfarlane keeps to the facts as recorded by Florey in his letters, or otherwise documented. He has produced a most satisfying addition to the literature about one of the most important of all medical discoveries.

GERHARD BÖHME, *Medizinische Porträts berühmter Komponisten*, Stuttgart and New York, Fischer Verlag, 1979, 8vo, pp. ix, 191, illus., DM. 39.00.

Reviewed by Renate Burgess, Ph.D., Keeper of Art Collections, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BP.

The word "portraits" in the title indicates that Dr. Böhme aims at well-filled-in biographical sketches of six composers including highlights on their musical creations.

Book Reviews

The wide frame of contemporary cultural references is bound to remain limited, as the author states in his preface. He also warns of the dangers besetting the work of medical historians when dealing with cases whose history extends up to two hundred years backwards.

The enigma of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's death is carefully analysed: contradictory reports from friends and enemies are treated for what they are worth. Tuberculosis, meningitis, rheumatic pericarditis, cardiac decomposition resulting from chronic nephritis, quoted as causes for his early death are discarded. The author accepts the murder theory of Dalchow, Duda, and Kerner (1966, 1971) as irrefutable, without, however, looking upon it as the only and exclusive solution.

Ludwig van Beethoven's increasing deafness combined with intestinal disorders is shown in its psychological effect upon the patient by a full quotation of the poignant *Testament of Heiligenstaedt*; his clinical history of the last years is illustrated by passages from the valuable *Konversationshefte*. Not forgotten is the composer's personal tendency to neglect doctors' orders. In the absence of any clear results from various autopsies, only modern medical knowledge can throw light on Beethoven's diagnosis: Dr. Böhme suggests Bang's disease or brucellosis complicated by an affection of the aural nerve.

Karl Maria von Weber's and Frédéric Chopin's medical histories extending through the first half of the nineteenth century bear witness to the contemporary ignorance regarding the diagnosis and therapy of tuberculosis and a strange neglect of dangers of contamination among the educated classes of those days.

Peter Iljitsch Tchaikovski's numerous physical and nervous complaints were recognized as endogenous by his doctors, but could not be treated adequately during his lifetime. If Dr. Böhme had known Tchaikovski's biography by Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson (1966), his account might have been enriched by the additional knowledge of valuable, unpublished Russian sources, from which the composer emerges as a far fuller, highly emotional, and idealistic personality.

The sympathetic account of Bela Bartok's life and suffering shows how in modern times the secrecy about his leukaemia would complicate the patient's relationship to his doctors.

With remarkable insight the author describes the titanic fight of each composer against the debilitating effects of his illness, pointing out how often, in periods of weakness and deep depression their greatest musical creations were born. His avowed wish to trace a reciprocity between the ups and downs of disease and musical creativity is envisaged in the preface, but wisely dismissed as an attempt doomed to fail. The pathographies include reproductions from portraits and life- and death-masks. They present not only pictures of gradual decay, but unforgettable facial expressions.

CHARLES WEBSTER (editor), *Health, medicine and mortality in the sixteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, 8vo, pp. xiv, 394, illus., £18.50.

Reviewed by Vivian Nutton, M.A., Ph.D., Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Rd., London NW1 2BP.

The late Sanford V. Larkey had planned a comprehensive survey of medicine in Tudor England based on primary texts and sources. This volume, dedicated to his