

## Book Reviews

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*The Life and Times of Sir Charles Hastings, Founder of the British Medical Association.*

WILLIAM H. MCMENEMEY. Edinburgh, E. & S. Livingstone, 1959; pp. 516.

Illustrated. 50s. net.

'Social life is the aggregate of all the individual men's lives who constitute society. History is the essence of innumerable biographies.' No better exemplification of this dictum of Carlyle's could be found than Dr. McMenemy's *The Life and Times of Sir Charles Hastings*. Its subtitle *Founder of the British Medical Association* indicates the dominant theme.

It is nine years since, as President of the British Medical Association, I took the chair when the author delivered the first Sir Charles Hastings Memorial Lecture at Worcester on this theme. The present volume is a monument to his continuing and immense industry and research, yet his flowing, leisurely style makes for easy reading.

Charles Hastings was born at Ludlow in 1794, and died at his home at the foot of the Malvern Hills at the age of seventy-two. He was the son of a clergyman, but was soon drawn to medicine, and after a term as an apothecary's apprentice he became, at the age of eighteen, house surgeon to Worcester Infirmary, the hospital with which he was to be associated during the whole of his active professional life. He was trained at Edinburgh University where he gained his M.D., and was President of the Royal Medical Society, whose diploma he received. He declined an offer of an extramural lectureship in anatomy and physiology at Edinburgh because of a forthcoming vacancy for a physician at Worcester Infirmary which was announced, and for which his mother had solicited public support in the *Worcester Journal* of 1818, before he had qualified! He was appointed to the vacancy, and within a year was President of the Worcester Medical and Surgical Society. His main clinical interests lay in chest diseases—he published a monograph on inflammation of the lungs—and in infectious diseases, especially cholera, and he rapidly established himself as one of the leading physicians of the county. He held many other hospital appointments, and was medical officer to St. Clements for the prevention of cholera.

But his main interests were to be the betterment of his profession. In 1828, he founded and edited anonymously the *Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter*—a quarterly journal—largely of case records. It was the impending failure of this journal in 1832, after sixteen issues, which led Hastings to conceive the idea of a Provincial Medical and Surgical Association. This flourished beyond his expectations, and merged with other local medical societies to become in 1855 the British Medical Association. Hastings and his Association were moreover mainly responsible, through the Medical Reform Committee, for the Medical Act of 1858 which established the General Medical Council with its educational and disciplinary powers.

To this bare outline of Hastings' life Dr. McMenemy brings a wealth of fascinating detail—of Hastings' family life, of his professional colleagues, of the jealousies and frustrations which nearly wrecked Hastings' efforts to organise the profession for its own protection, to increase its status, and protect the public from the unqualified.

Many whose names are now forgotten figure largely. Henry Ancell, who devoted much of his life to medical reform, a little man of whom the *Lancet* wrote that he had 'the head of Socrates on the shoulders of Xantippe'; Edward Barlow, who with

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James Parkinson of 'paralysis agitans' fame, was speaking for medical reform in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and played a major role in founding the P.M.S.A.; of Sir John Forbes, John Conolly, John Kidd, George Webster, and a host of others. And many notorious characters are again brought vividly to life in all their waverings and machinations, notably Thomas Wakley of the *Lancet*.

It might well seem niggardly to suggest that the detail at times tends to obscure the main theme and that it would make for easier reference if the chapter headings were printed at the top of alternate pages and the years in the margin. This is, however, a minor criticism of a masterly and scholarly work, which should be read by all who are interested in the history of the organization of the medical profession in the first sixty years of the nineteenth century, and especially in the movements which led to the founding of the British Medical Association, and the passing of the Medical Act of 1858.

COHEN OF BIRKENHEAD

*Parasites and Parasitic Infections in Early Medicine and Science.* R. HOEPLI. University of Malaya Press, Singapore, 1959; pp. xiv+526, with 23 plates.

The University Press in Singapore is to be congratulated on producing a volume which would be a noble achievement from any press in the world. Professor Hoeppli's name is well known in medical circles through many countries; after occupying the chair of parasitology in Peking for 22 years, he taught for a time in Singapore, and with indefatigable devotion to this science and to the welfare of tropical human-kind, is now working in Liberia. In this book he brings together many substantial papers on the history of parasitology long sought after by historians of medicine and the biological sciences.

There are three main sections of the volume. The eleven chapters of the first discuss important general subjects such as the knowledge of human parasites in different ages and cultures, the description and clinical treatments of parasitic affections, and ideas on spontaneous generation. The twelve chapters of the second section deal with more specialised subjects, half of them with special reference to China, e.g. malaria and dysentery in Chinese medicine, the use of leeches in Asia, and the role assigned to the moon's phases in biology and medicine in east and west. Finally, the third section gives a brief, but most judicious, outline of the development of parasitology in the period of modern science from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards.

This arrangement is perfectly logical. Indeed Professor Hoeppli's book breaks new ground not only in its own subject, but because it is the first book on any such subject in the history of science which treats of medieval Chinese, Indian and Arabic contributions on exactly the same level, and with the same detail, and the same degree of seriousness, as those of Western antiquity and the Middle Ages. The scholarly value of the work is very greatly enhanced by an abundant use of Chinese characters. One must salute in it the work of a great scientific humanist.

JOSEPH NEEDHAM

*The Royal Edinburgh Hospital for Sick Children, 1860-1960.* DOUGLAS GUTHRIE, with various contributors. Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone, 1960; pp. xii+75. Illustrated. 17s. 6d.

This book will be greatly valued by those who have worked in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital for Sick Children in the past. They will recognize familiar places and recall