

### Book Reviews

surely have been justifiable to exclude some of the plates shown (for instance, Queen Victoria, whose appearance is well known) in favour of some specimens from his collection.

The author has been led away from his primary object of telling us about these specimens by the many exciting stories which he has discovered (though not all are new) on the way.

The priority of Dr. William Scott's administration of ether at Dumfries on 19 December 1847 (two days before Liston's amputation at University College Hospital) has led Dr. Sykes up a tortuous path of research. It is a pity that he was unable to discover more about the Dr. Fraser who is supposed to have carried the news of ether across the Atlantic.

In following the story of Morton's first use of ether, Dr. Sykes has brought to light the little-known facts that Morton had used ether in thirty-seven cases before the historic operation at the Massachusetts General Hospital, and that he used to give large doses of laudanum as pre-medication. It is strange that this interesting reference has not been quoted before.

The essay on curare is misleading. No mention is made of the liana, the *Chondrodendron tomentosum*, from which our modern d-tubocurarine is prepared. The impression is given that the important plant is the *Strychnos toxifera*, which is certainly used in the preparation of the native arrow-poisons, but which does not contain tubocurarine among its alkaloids.

Dr. Sykes writes in a lively, if rather jerky, and sometimes, too casual style. This reviewer may be old-fashioned, but he does like to see a verb in a sentence (*vide* pp. 71, 124).

The book is produced in the careful manner which characterizes the house of Livingstone, but the index is too selective. This is a book which anaesthetists should read for its many pieces of information upon their speciality. The medical historian will require more cohesion and co-ordination.

K. BRYN THOMAS

*A Catalogue of the Portraits and other Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture in the Royal College of Surgeons of England.* W. R. LE FANU. Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd., 1960; pp. xii, 301. Plates (4 coloured). 30s.

This magnificent catalogue records 245 portraits of surgeons and 113 other works of art which are in the possession of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. The medical corporations are great repositories of art, and the Surgeons' collection, containing as it does pictures inherited from the old Company of Surgeons, items commissioned by John Hunter, and examples of the work of many modern portrait painters, ranks among the most important of its kind. Considered solely as examples of portraiture, not all the pictures come up to the standard of Romney's 'Percivall Pott' or Reynolds's 'John Hunter', but the great majority are works of the finest quality. As a portrait gallery of the makers of British surgery the collection is unrivalled; as a collection representative of the work of leading portrait painters and sculptors, from Holbein to Epstein, it will be valued by all lovers of art. Mr. W. R. Le Fanu, the Librarian of the College and the compiler of this catalogue, has catered both for the medical historian and the art lover. Full descriptions of the pictures and busts are provided, together with notes on copies, derivative works and engravings, published reproductions, provenance, and many other interesting details.

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The catalogue contains more than 300 plates, four of which are in colour; those in black and white are of excellent quality, but the colour plates have not come out quite so well. Sir Caesar Hawkins (plate 102) would seem to be suffering from one of the acute exanthemata.

The Royal College of Surgeons is a forward-looking body which also, happily, continues to provide evidence of an appreciation of its treasures and of its historical traditions. Mr. Le Fanu's Catalogue is a worthy companion volume to the *Lives of the Fellows* and to Sir Zachary Cope's *History*; it is, indeed, a model work of its kind.

W. J. B.

*The Royal West Sussex Hospital. The First Hundred Years, 1784-1884.* FRANCIS W. STEER, M.A., F.S.A. Published by the Chichester City Council, 1960; pp. 22, 5 illustrations. 3s. 6d. (Obtainable from The Town Clerk, Greyfriars, Chichester, and booksellers.)

This pamphlet, which is No. 15 of the Chichester Papers, contains a wealth of interesting matter concerning the early history of the Royal West Sussex Hospital, which was founded in 1784 as the Chichester Dispensary and did not acquire its present name until 1913. Although the early histories of infirmaries and dispensaries tend to run to a common general pattern—benevolent founders, imposing Rules, high aspirations, rapid growth, a never-ending struggle to make both ends meet, trouble with drains, epidemics, high mortality among house surgeons, embezzling secretaries, professional squabbles and worthy benefactors—every institution has its own individuality. The archives of the Royal West Sussex Hospital are unusually complete and interesting; the first registers of patients, covering the period 1784-1800, were rescued from a London bookstall in 1895 and are still intact, together with some 150 volumes of other registers and case books. This wealth of material has enabled Mr. Steer to record many details of hospital management for which histories are usually consulted in vain. There are intriguing stories of a (presumably male) patient who attempted to enter the women's ward in disguise, of colossal expenditure on leeches, and of a house surgeon who absented himself during the three days of the Goodwood races. The illustrations include a reproduction of the painted portrait of Sir John Forbes, M.D., the translator of Laënnec, who was the most celebrated of the Honorary Physicians to the Hospital. Brief notes are given on other early members of the staff; one would like to know more about Mrs. Rogers who was Matron of the Hospital for thirty years in the pre-Nightingale era. Mr. Steer gives a list of the singularly complete archives of the hospital, most of which are now stored at the County Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, where they will be available to future historians. Many readers of Mr. Steer's concise history will hope that he may himself find time to provide the full-scale book on the Chichester hospitals which he is so well qualified to write.

W. J. B.

*Pharmacy Jars at the Royal College of Surgeons of England. An Annotated Catalogue.* SIR VICTOR NEGUS, F.R.C.S., 1959. Mimeographed, pp. 24.

In this catalogue Sir Victor Negus describes the fine collection of drug jars, comprising nearly one hundred specimens, in the possession of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. The great majority of the jars were bequeathed to the college by the late Sir St. Clair Thomson, who besides being an oto-laryngologist of international