

Book Reviews

C. R. S. HARRIS, *The heart and the vascular system in ancient Greek medicine. From Alcmaeon to Galen*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973, pp. xii, 474, illus., £15.00.

Why did the Greeks fail to discover the circulation of the blood? In fact, it has been suggested by various historians of the past century that at least one of the Hippocratic writers and Galen *did* understand the circulation. C. R. S. Harris's *The heart and the vascular system in ancient Greek medicine* should bury that myth for ever. In this work he not only examines the whole issue, but demonstrates that such straightforward queries can lead to exacting scholarship of the first order. There is no need for wild speculation or clever hypotheses: merely to translate accurately and to explicate sympathetically can solve more historical puzzles than the wishful anachronistic approaches of "modernizers" such as Richard Kapferer.

The Greeks did have an extensive knowledge of the anatomy of the heart and blood vessels, and one of Dr. Harris's achievements has been to collect and present both in translation and in the original Greek most of the relevant passages from pre-Hippocratic fragments of Alcmaeon and Pythagoras to the rich profusion of the Galenic corpus. This makes the text mostly English and the footnotes mostly Greek, and while this procedure lengthens the work and increases the price of the book, it also turns it into a reference tool for specialists. At the same time, the text is elegantly written and contains a clear and readable account of its subject.

Dr. Harris follows a roughly chronological arrangement, devoting chapters to the pre-Hippocratics, to Hippocrates and his school, to Aristotle and other post-Hippocratic writers, to the Alexandrians, to "Greek medicine in Rome", and to Galen. His discussion of Galen is almost a monograph in itself, occupying more than 150 pages, and since Galen is often our source for the opinions of his predecessors, the Pergamum physician and philosopher looms large throughout the work. We are made aware both of Galen's great originality, and his extensive debts to those who went before, even Erasistratus, for instance, whom he loved to refute. Since the cardio-vascular system occupied a crucial place in Greek physiological thought, Dr. Harris can make numerous excursions without losing the thread of his central topic. Thus, he elucidates the on-going Greek debate on the primacy of the brain or the heart as the seat of mental life, and traces the historical vagaries of the concept of the *pneuma*. His review of the literature relating to the authorship of the Hippocratic corpus is a model of clarity and fairness. Throughout Dr. Harris has shown himself the master of both the primary and secondary literature of his subject.

The full analytical index adds to the usefulness of the work, which can be warmly recommended as an outstanding contribution to our knowledge of Greek medicine.

THOMAS B. TURNER, *Heritage of excellence. The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, 1914–1947*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, pp. viii, 648, illus., £8.75.

Between 1943 and 1963 the late Dr. Alan M. Chesney published his three-volume history of the Johns Hopkins Hospital and the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, which covered the period from 1867, when the Johns Hopkins Trust was created, to 1914. Now the distinguished Dean Emeritus of the Medical Faculty continues the story, divided into four chronological periods: World War I; the 1920s;

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the Great Depression and its aftermath; World War II and its aftermath.

During the second period there was active expansion: the School of Hygiene in 1925, the first of its kind in the U.S.A., and no less than eleven further major additions to the Medical Institutes. These included the Welch Medical Library and the world-renowned Institute of the History of Medicine, dedicated in 1928. History of medicine had been a feature of the Hospital and School from the beginning, fostered by Osler, Welch, Kelly, Jacobs, and many other staff members. Garrison was first Librarian and Welch the first occupant of the endowed chair in the history of medicine (1926), to be followed by Henry E. Sigerist, Richard H. Shryock, Owsei Temkin, and the present holder Lloyd G. Stevenson.

Throughout its history the Johns Hopkins has been dependent upon the society it is part of, and in its turn has given back to society benefits both locally to Baltimore, and nationally and internationally by providing a centre of excellence for teaching, training, and research. Throughout its eighty or so years of existence the Hospital and Medical School have maintained consistently their position as one of the most outstanding medical institutions in the world, what Alan Gregg called "the heritage of excellence", a phrase selected by Dr. Turner for his title. It is against this intellectual and inspiring environment, compounded of dedicated members of staff and top-quality students, that the recorded events of history are here portrayed.

It is a remarkably full record, some may say too full, and the author has called upon his own experience as well as using archives to provide a living account of a remarkable phenomenon. It will be read widely because of this, both to inform and to inspire. It can be warmly recommended.

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H. M. KOELBING (ed.), *Carl August Wunderlich, Wien und Paris. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Beurteilung der gegenwärtigen Heilkunde in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1841*, Berne, H. Huber, 1974, pp. 159, illus., DM. 25 (DM.19 paperback).

In the first half of the nineteenth century Paris was the predominant medical centre in Europe, but in the 1840s Vienna and other German cities had already begun to overtake the French capital, eventually to displace it. Wunderlich (1815–1877), a typical product of the new German school of clinical medicine and pathological anatomy, was in 1841 the author of the book that is here re-published. In it he wished to bring to the attention of his readers the activities of two cities of outstanding medical excellence. It, therefore, provides us with a vivid account of the best in European medicine as practised in 1840. Among the many interesting features are Wunderlich's remarks concerning the medical specialities in their embryonic forms.

Professor Koelbing provides an introduction, dealing mainly with Wunderlich and his medical career. There are also notes to the essay, a glossary of obscure words, and a list of individuals mentioned.

Descriptions of contemporary medicine, especially if recorded by an acute and critical observer, are documents of the greatest value to the historian. We are, therefore, grateful to Professor Koelbing for providing us with a scholarly edition of this one.