

Book Reviews

Physikalische Heilmethoden in der ersten Wiener Medizinischen Schule, by URSULA SCHÄFER (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Geschichte der Mathematik und der Naturwissenschaften, No. 4), Vienna, Hermann Böhlau, 1967, pp. 238, illus., ÖS.108.

Medicine on the European continent has always favoured physical treatment methods more than its insular counterpart in these Islands. It is probably only since the advent of the National Health Service that the accolade of respectability has been conferred upon 'Physical Medicine', as it is now known here, by recognizing it as a specialty in its own right.

It is true that, in their nineteenth-century heyday, Harrogate and Bath rivalled such mid-European spas as Baden-Baden and Karlsbad, which specialized in baths, massage and, of course, 'taking the waters'. On the other hand, although other physical techniques notably electrotherapy were pioneered by such men as Duchenne de Boulogne, they were and still are, on the whole, considered to be cranky and 'on the fringe'.

This large paperback deals with the practice and practitioners of physical medicine in the Austria of the eighteenth century. The text begins with a somewhat scrappy historical review. In this connection, a definitive history of physical medicine remains to be written. It should be interesting for, after all, few specialties can boast such widely differing characters as Benjamin Franklin, Marat and John Wesley. Be that as it may, an account of Viennese medicine in the age of Maria Theresa is then followed by a chapter on physical healing methods in the eighteenth century, taking in hydrotherapy, massage, gymnastics and electrotherapy.

The main body of the work, however, deals in detail and seriatim with the members of the First Viennese School—van Swieten, de Haen and his critic Kirchvogel, and Stoll. The section ends with some observations on the technical hypothesis underlying the basis of this form of treatment in Vienna.

For reasons which are not apparent to me, the work of a further six practitioners is then detailed. These are lesser lights such as Plenciz, Quarin and Hasenöhrle.

A final summary is preceded by yet another biographical discussion on the role of the last practitioner of the period, Pasqual Joseph Ferro (1753–1809) who was a great believer in the virtues of cold water.

In addition to a list of sources and a bibliography, there are liberal footnotes throughout as well as four glossy plates at the end of the book, which has been published as one of a series by the Austrian Academy of Science.

It has obviously been a labour of love for its authoress. Although the layout of the text requires some tidying-up in my view, it provides a useful introduction to a somewhat esoteric subject.

I. M. LIBRACH

Surgeon in the Crimea, by GEORGE LAWSON, London, Constable, 1968, pp. 209, illus., 35s.

George Lawson was the son of a City wine merchant. He enrolled at King's College in 1848 at the age of seventeen years, obtaining the M.R.C.S. Eng. in 1852. After becoming house-surgeon to Sir William Fergusson he entered the Army as Assistant