

Book Reviews

departments and lecture theatres, in general practice, among the nursing profession, in the pathological laboratory, dispensary, chemist's shop, factory, or the showroom of the medical and surgical equipment house—Stensen's duct, Pott's fracture, Spencer Wells' forceps, Wassermann reaction, Glauber's salts. Students, nurses and their teachers wanting to know who these people were will find the answer amongst these 83 short, well-written biographies. Each is illustrated with a portrait and often a picture of the hospital in which they worked and a diagram of what they described. Many will be surprised to find that Lugol died more than a century ago, and that Klumpke was an attractive-looking lady. Not the least interesting features are the pictures of many of the world's most famous hospitals and universities and the extraordinary range of beards and moustaches. There is much new material in this edition.

WILLIAM BROCKBANK

Variations on a Theme by Sydenham: Smallpox. P. B. WILKINSON. Bristol: John Wright, 1959; pp. 76. Illustrated. 17s 6d.

An epidemic of smallpox struck Hong Kong in the winter of 1937. In one week of March 1938 there were 236 cases with 192 deaths. Dr. Wilkinson's painstaking clinical account fills forty pages of text and thirty-five pages of photographs. The text, a tapestry of carefully chosen words, gives a more striking picture than the illustrations, good and occasionally gruesome as these are. The reader can also discern a portrait of the Author, the clinician-observer after the style of Louis, human and humane in outlook, sceptical and powerless in treatment, in his hand a volume of Sydenham's works while he watches his patients suffer, recover or die and confirms the observations of the Master.

A light thread of bantering humour runs through Dr. Wilkinson's picture. At first this seems out of place. But perhaps a little levity was needed for the Author's (and the Reader's) peace of mind in the face of this anachronistic tragedy. Treatment in the book does not include prevention. In 1937 the theme for smallpox might have been, not by Sydenham, but by Jenner. And then there might have been no chance to read this most attractive book.

ALFRED WHITE FRANKLIN

Havelock Ellis, a Biography. A. CALDER-MARSHALL. London: (Rupert Hart-Davis), 1959; pp. 292. Illustrated. 30s.

To record a faithful and effective account of the life and activities of an individual is never as easy as it seems. In the first place there is either too much or too little material from which to erect the monument. Thus, a man who has published more than fifty books on a wide variety of subjects, including an autobiography and *An Open Letter to Biographers*, as well as leaving voluminous unpublished works and letters, and about whom five biographical records have already appeared, presents a formidable problem to anyone who wishes to commemorate the centenary of his birth by an appreciative volume. If in addition the subject selected possessed an incredibly complex and introspective personality, and if during the majority of his eighty years he dealt with a controversial subject, such as sex, the task of a prospective biographer is seen to be immense indeed. Such is the case with Havelock Ellis. That Mr. Calder-Marshall has been successful is an indication of the excellence of his book.

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After a brief period of teaching in Australia, during which he spent more time and effort on his own education than on that of his pupils, Ellis returned to England. His adolescence was painful and difficult, and while continuing his self-education by omnivorous reading, he was involved with a succession of intellectual oddities. He was compounded of contradictory paradoxes and shyness, and, being unable to reveal to the world 'the wonderful beautiful soul in him', he was usually misunderstood. Furthermore, he became aware of his own sexual inadequacy. At the age of twenty-two years he took up medicine and seven years later qualified by means of the L.S.A. From now until his death in 1939, he devoted his life to the physiology, psychology and pathology of sex, and in his career is to be found the recent history of sexual knowledge and the changing social attitude to it. There were five women of importance in his life, only one of whom he married. Convinced of his own limitations, he did not experience the happiness and normal relationships about which he wrote so eloquently and at such length until he was over sixty. He spent his old age in happy and productive contentment, being described once as 'like a great, deep well full of wisdom and beauty'.

Mr. Calder-Marshall has written an excellent biography although he admits there is no attempt to appraise the literary and scientific work. Much help was given by Ellis's literary executor—the lady with whom he spent the last twenty-three years of his life—and, after considerable labour the biographer was able to achieve contact with an elusive and mystical genius. In his usual engaging style he takes us through the philosophical and psychological complexities of what on the whole was a rather dull life, painlessly and pleasantly. The last chapter is particularly skilful and effective. He concludes the book with a bibliography, a short list of books about Ellis and an adequate index.

This work is an outstanding contribution to the history of sexology as illustrated by the life of its most famous exponent. We are, however, too close in time to evaluate adequately and appreciate fully this most interesting man. Was he a genius or was he a maladjusted but fearless crusader described by some as a bore? If Osler is correct in saying that 'history is the biography of the mind of man, and its educational value is in direct proportion to the completeness of our study of the individuals through whom this mind has been manifested', the life and work of Havelock Ellis will provide much more work for future historians.

EDWIN CLARKE

Royal College of Surgeons of England: A History. SIR ZACHARY COPE. London: Anthony Blond, 1959; pp. xii + 360. Illustrated. 63s.

This is the first time that an authentic history has been written about the origin and development of the Royal College of Surgeons up to the present time. The text is interesting, informative, often amusing and makes excellent reading. It is freely illustrated with many portraits.

Beginning with the breakaway from the Barber Surgeons the author discusses and describes such things as the astonishing attacks on the College by the Editor of the *Lancet*, the constant trouble with the Members, the foundation of the Fellowship and its examinations with an amusing account by a candidate of the first Final examination, the birth of the Dental profession, the fight for the admission of women to the examinations of the College, the immense developments after the end of each of the two world wars when the College advanced from the status of an examining body