

Book Reviews

coherently than a strictly biographical approach would permit. Yet there does remain throughout this part a noticeable lack of thematic connection, for which even the very full index is not a completely adequate substitute. One looks in vain, for instance, for a continuous account of the varied fortunes of atomism, though plenty of scattered references to the topic may be found (Dalton's enunciation of the theory does not appear in this volume).

Part II, the History of Physical Chemistry, is a mine of compressed information on the development of six main branches of the subject, each having one chapter. The two chapters of the organic Part revert to the more biographical approach of Part I and richly repay examination by any whose work involves the chemistry of living things. Inorganic chemistry is handled in a similar way, and the final Part deals briefly with the birth of nuclear science and the events leading up to the quantum theory.

Strictly medical topics receive little attention. Even chemotherapy is not discussed, and anaesthetics receive a single paragraph. However, excellent accounts are given of the changing views on fermentation, Liebig's physiological chemistry, early work on osmosis and colloids, and the attack on structural problems presented by carbohydrates, proteins, fats, alkaloids and other natural products. And the chemical contributions of medical men like Carlisle, Crum Brown, Odling, Wurtz, and many others are a reminder that medicine's debt to chemistry is not entirely one-sided.

Inevitably, some misprints have been observed (a surprisingly high proportion of which are in the index). The author's reluctance to relate his narrative to contemporary social and philosophical outlooks will not meet with universal approval, nor will the precise selection of the subject-matter with its emphasis so strongly on 'pure' chemistry. Yet these deficiencies (if so they be) are largely a result of the need to compress so vast a quantity of information into a manageable number of pages. To those whose interests in the history of recent medicine prompt further inquiries into the chemical origins of their subject, this book may be warmly commended as the most useful single reference work of its kind that has yet appeared.

G. A. RUSSELL

De Heelkunde in de Vroege Middeleeuwen, by D. DE MOULIN, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1964, pp. 166, 23 plates, 25 fl.

This is a doctoral dissertation submitted to the Catholic University of Nijmegen in July of this year, dealing with medicine in the early Middle Ages. It divides the matter into seven main sections, physicians, literature, surgical texts, medical illustrations, surgical anaesthesia, instruments and bandages, with a final section on the healing of various wounds, fractures and so on. A summary of the contents of the book written in English, followed by a comprehensive bibliography, concludes the study.

The subject chosen by the author is a wide one, covering as it does the seventh to the eleventh centuries, and one not easily digested because previous studies dealing with it are dispersed over a great number of journals, authors and countries, or because the texts on which our knowledge depends are unpublished, or if published, have been presented in haphazard fashion. Great credit is due to the author for having gathered all these threads together and woven them into a logical, readable and interesting synthesis. This does not mean that it is a mere compilation, a regurgitation of other peoples' ideas. Far from it. It is a critical appraisal of all the evidence, enlivened here and there by an independence of thought rarely found in doctoral theses, and more rarely still in books on the history of medicine generally. For this the author deserves high praise.

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There are two notable features of the book which merit special commendation: the first is the publication of early surgical texts, the second the inclusion of exceptionally good illustrations. The surgical texts are those of the pseudo-Galenic *Introductio sive Medicus* from the ninth-century manuscript of Reichenau, the *Epistula de fleotomia* and the *Epistula de incisione* from Brussels, and the *Liber cyrurgie Ypocratis* from Paris. We must be grateful for the enterprise which led the author to transcribe these valuable fragments, but it is a pity that he stopped there and did not give us a critical text based on all the available manuscripts. The Paris text of the *Epistula de fleotomia*, for instance, is much more correct and would have made clear quite a number of readings which make nonsense here: it would also have saved him from putting *idem* for *idest*, *ut* for *vel* and several other details he will surely correct on another occasion.

As for the illustrations, a number of which concern manuscripts in the British Museum (and these are in colour), and which enable us to control the author's commentary on them, we have nothing but praise. He has successfully interpreted the figure in Harley 1585, which has puzzled many others, as that of Isaiah having his lips cleansed by a burning coal and serving as an *apologia* for cautery, but I think he is mistaken in saying, p. 114, that the surgeon in Sloane 2839 is not a monk. If he looks closer I think he will find that the surgeon has a tonsure, and so is at least a cleric. These blemishes apart, and they are very minor blemishes, the book is extremely good and one can but hope that the author will continue to follow up the studies he has so promisingly begun.

C. H. TALBOT

St. John's Hospital for Diseases of the Skin 1863-1963, edited by BRIAN RUSSELL, Edinburgh and London, E. & S. Livingstone 1963, pp. viii, 71, illus., 27s. 6d.

St. John's Hospital for Diseases of the Skin achieved its present eminence only after a checkered career during which time, on more than one occasion, it appeared as if its doors must be permanently closed. Founded in 1863 through the efforts primarily of John Laws Milton, a surgeon with a special interest in cutaneous problems, the purpose of the new hospital, so it was announced, was to provide special care for diseases of the skin, notably for the assistance of the working and serving classes whose employment was at the mercy of superficial appearance. Opposition to the new hospital was vigorous, especially in the columns of the *Lancet*, which pointed out the danger of further division of available public contributions which might better be used for the support of existing hospitals.

First located in Church Street within the parish of St. Anne's, the new hospital, owing to internal strife, came perilously near to closing after a year of operation. In the succeeding years, during which time it was moved from one address to another within the same vicinity before gaining its present site on Lisle Street (1935), the hospital was beset by a succession of further misfortunes weathered through the personal conviction and strength—even ruthlessness—of Mr. Milton and then of Dr. Morgan Dockerell, consulting physician from 1888 to 1920, who during much of his tenure appears to have exercised a well-meaning but autocratic control. Bad publicity, inexperienced but innocent handling of finances which permitted rumours of peculation, the resignation of such men as Erasmus Wilson and Tilbury Fox, and a rash of competing institutions sprung up around 1870, represented problems finally met and overcome. Ultimate success appears to have been based first upon the will to survive, then reorganization of the accounting system, several successfully prosecuted libel suits, lessening of a kind of domineering control of the staff which formerly had undermined morale, and from about 1920 onwards a succession of appointments