

### Book Reviews

GUIDO MAJNO, *The healing hand. Man and wound in the ancient world*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1975, large 8vo, pp. [xxvi], 571, illus., £13.75.

The commonest surgical procedure over the centuries has been the handling of the wound, and yet this is the first book to deal with the matter in detail. Dr. Majno, who is now chairman of the Department of Pathology at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, has spent ten years investigating how the wound was treated in Antiquity, ranging from the Mesopotamian cultures to Galen in the second century A.D., and including China and India. The result is an important contribution to the history of surgery.

In the first place it is based on extensive research into a vast array of primary and secondary sources; the bibliography runs to forty-four pages, the notes accompanying the text to sixty-six, and there are thirteen pages of notes on the book's 305 illustrations, fifteen of which are in colour. Throughout, Dr Majno gives adequate information about the culture or period he is dealing with, as well as his account of the wounds encountered and how they were treated. He writes well, although occasionally he can be accused of light-hearted irreverence, and at times a deficiency in historical sense and background medical history can be detected.

One of the outstanding features of his book is that the author is not content only to transmit knowledge concerning ancient forms of therapy, but he questions why certain substances should have been employed and if, indeed, they were efficacious. There is only one way of answering these queries adequately and that is by indulging in "practical history". Using this technique Dr. Majno is able to show quite conclusively by laboratory experiments that grease and honey used by the Ancient Egyptians and wine by the Greeks are both beneficial to wounds for they diminish infection and promote healing. Frankincense, myrrh, and other resins and balsams can also be shown to be bacteriostatic, and cinammon and cassia likewise. Metallic compounds, especially iron rust and bronze rust, were used on wounds by the Ancient Greeks, and these two are antiseptic in action. The technique of using the jaws of large ants to keep wound edges approximated might seem somewhat far-fetched, but Professor Majno has used *Eciton burchelli* to show that this is practicable and reliable.

Altogether, therefore, this is an outstanding work which sheds new light on an all-important aspect of early surgery. It can be thoroughly recommended and is well worth what seems to be a high price.

CLÉOPÂTRE MONTANDON, *Le développement de la science à Genève aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles. Le cas d'une communauté scientifique*, Vevey, Delta, 1975, 8vo, pp. 169, paperback, [no price stated].

The author provides an excellent study of the growth of scientific activity in a relatively small community during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She takes particular note of the external or social influences, partly as a reaction to previous investigators who have considered only the internal. She shows how science develops by a combination of all factors, and by the intellectual and political control of the scientists themselves. Scientific creativity is another factor and is determined by the interaction of hereditary (internal) and sociocultural (external) influences, together with the relative status of the individual in his scientific career.

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Micro-structural data are obtained from a survey of scientists born between 1700 and 1845, and the macro-structural from the history of Geneva, especially its educational systems and social levels. Analysis reveals clearly that socio-cultural factors are of prime importance. Thus most of the outstanding scientists came from the higher classes, and the emergence of scientific activity could be shown to relate to a combination of local and general social factors.

This is a scholarly work with full documentation. Extensive use is made of tables, graphs and diagrams, and the author provides a model that others can perhaps employ when focusing down on a comparable community elsewhere in the world. It can be highly recommended and should be consulted by all those carrying out research in science or medicine in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

G. RUTHVEN MITCHELL, *Homeopathy. The first authoritative study of its place in medicine today*, London, W. H. Allen, 1975, 8vo, pp. viii, 200, illus., £4.95.

Homeopathy considered historically is a most interesting and important phenomenon. Its origin, growth and modification reveal a fascinating aspect of medicine, especially in the nineteenth century, and, as the dust-jacket proclaims, it is “. . . an ancient healing art that is an ever-growing force in medicine today”. The historian, who must link his studies with the present day, will, therefore, welcome an authoritative book by a medically qualified, practising homeopathist that surveys the modern practice of the art and its relationships to what most people would prefer to call the more orthodox type of medicine. As one of the few modern expositions on the subject, Dr. Mitchell's book can be recommended. Not only does it present the state of homeopathy today, but it also deals with its history, the author's whole approach, in fact, being historical. However, not all the history is reliable and statements such as “the speculative philosophising of Galen” do not increase our confidence in the author as an historian.

It is still not clear, however, how homeopathy achieves its claimed successes and we need now a non-homeopathist to evaluate its contribution to the medicine of today. Perhaps it is playing a useful role as a counterbalance to its increasingly scientific and expensive rival, allopathic medicine.

EILER H. SCHIÖTZ and JAMES CYRIAX, *Manipulation past and present, with an extensive bibliography*, London, Heinemann, 1975, 8vo, pp. vi, 222, illus., £4.25.

Dr. Schiötz is a distinguished Norwegian physician and Dr. Cyriax is equally well known as an orthopaedic physician, coming from a family renowned for its contributions to manipulative medicine. Their book has two distinct parts, and the first by Dr. Schiötz deals with the history of manipulation from the earliest times to the twentieth century (pp. 3–63). Manipulators, bone-setters, osteopaths, chiropractors and modern therapists are dealt with and a great deal of interesting and original material is presented. The associated bibliography (pp. 187–216) is extensive and will be of the greatest value to historians of medicine and to those concerned with the history of manipulation. It covers all periods and many languages.

The second part, by Dr. Cyriax, deals with the present-day position and in so doing he provides additional historical information on orthodox and unorthodox