

Book Reviews

MATTHEW RAMSEY, *Professional and popular medicine in France, 1770–1830. The social world of medical practice*, Cambridge History of Medicine, Cambridge University Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. xvii, 406, illus., £35.00, \$49.50.

Between 1770 and 1830, the boundaries of medical practice were redefined as new élitist forms arose and popular methods declined. The rise of official medicine in France, especially its structure and content, has been thoroughly examined; however, the traditional medicine that was challenged and eventually displaced has been ignored. Matthew Ramsey, in this excellent analysis, the first of a two-volume study, has not only supplied abundant information about popular methods, but has shown that each type of practice was informed by the other.

Beginning with a look at official medicine, Ramsey builds on the work of Toby Gelfand and Jacques Léonard to examine the nature of and changes in the activities, income, distribution, and organization of surgeons and physicians. For the second part of the book, a wealth of previously untapped archival material and literary sources is used to describe the world of traditional practitioners. This is a very difficult proposition, since the often silent or illiterate subjects can be traced only when they transgressed the accepted limits of their society or those of the emerging medical profession. The activities of such obscure healers as the mountebank, the *uromante*, and the *rebouteur*, are amply explained and their activities classified. Diseases that were peculiar to traditional understanding, like *les crinons* and *les hunes*, are discussed. A brief closing section is devoted to the overlap between the two forms of medicine as they fought for the same clientele and as they were perceived by their societies. Several maps and tables are provided and 16 illustrations bring the “characters” to life. Tables, in appendices, give the population densities of medical professionals in various parts of France and the names, dates, and locations of individual practitioners of specific popular methods.

This sophisticated study is scholarly and sensitive, but it is also fun. Ramsey apologizes if he has included description that is “more curious than necessary” (p. 6), but the voluminous information on various healers and their techniques delights as much as it lends credibility to his statements. The division of popular medical practitioners into irregular- and folk healers with smaller subdivisions (itinerant, sedentary, etc.) is disarmingly lucid, but sometimes it seems that it is a semantic exercise applicable more to nuances of behaviour than to persons. A few typographic errors in the text cause the reader to wonder how many may have spilled into the notes, spoiling the accuracy of the detailed references. More information about the illustrations, their provenance, and original purpose would have been welcome, as would an explanation for why almost all artists cited, graphic or literary, portrayed their subjects with a certain amount of scorn. Were there no patients who actually liked or admired their medical practitioners? And if not, why?

These complaints are quibbles that come from wanting more. This excellent analysis is a major contribution to social aspects of medical history and we look forward to volume two.

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WILLIAM COLEMAN and FREDERIC L. HOLMES (eds.), *The investigative enterprise: experimental physiology in nineteenth-century medicine*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988, 8vo. pp. v, 342, illus., \$39.95.

As the editors of this fine collection of essays stress in their thoughtful introduction, the rise and establishment of experimental physiology in the nineteenth century largely represented a change of scale—a shift from the singular efforts of individual pioneers to the integrated research and teaching activities of purposely-created institutes. The many factors that influence and characterize that shift occupy the authors in different ways. The principal focus of several contributors is the emergence of the Physiological Institute within the decentralized university system of Germany. In Coleman's essay about the young Purkinje in Breslau, a Prussian outpost in Slav territory, the wider politics of pedagogical reform are skilfully interwoven with the

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physiologist's adherence to Pestalozzi's educational theories of "hands-on" experience, and his practical application of those concepts to higher scientific education. The University of Heidelberg and the efforts there of Carl Pfeufer and Jacob Henle are placed by Tuchman against the background of liberal reforms initiated by the government of Baden, its utilitarian demands of the new educational system being exemplified by Henle's "rational" medicine with its emphasis on the acquisition of scientific knowledge and practical experience. In Leipzig, the similar belief, that a commanding lead in scientific knowledge was an essential component of state political and economic strength, was influential in allowing Carl Ludwig to establish his world-famous Institute. Equally important, according to Lenoir's assessment, was Ludwig's perception of the experimental laboratory as a vital constituent of clinical experience. This connection between physiology and medical practice, as indicated in the book's sub-title, is addressed more explicitly by Lesch in his essay on the Paris Academy of Medicine and Experimental Science from 1820 to 1848. He provides a detailed case-study of the debates about the fatality of accidentally introduced air in the pleural cavity and in venous blood, in which physiological experiments were performed to resolve clinical disputes about surgical procedures.

A different experimental departure, the active encouragement of collaboration between practitioners with different skills and outlooks, is detailed in Holmes's analysis of the Munich School of Metabolism. This group, although based in the Institute of Physiology, was not conterminous with it and here there is another shift in scale, as the technical and conceptual developments of the research school that grew around Justus Liebig, Theodor Bischoff, and Carl Voit are assessed.

These papers emphasize in different degrees the increasing reliance on specialized instrumentation, whether it be the kymograph, the microscope, or Pettenkofer's purpose-built metabolic chamber in Munich. This aspect is more specifically developed in Frank's chapter on cardiovascular physiology and recording techniques in the laboratory and in the clinic. Starting with Marey's sphygmograph and ending with Einthoven's string galvanometer, this paper cuts across the institutional framework chosen by the other contributors, and offers a broad view of the synergism between basic research and clinical diagnosis in the use and development of investigative techniques. It also charts the rise of the new breed of clinical scientist, represented by Thomas Lewis, thus neatly encapsulating the two main themes of the book—the rise of experimental physiology in the nineteenth century and its applicability to medical practice.

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FRANK PROCHASKA, *The voluntary impulse: philanthropy in modern Britain*, Historical Handbooks, London, Faber and Faber, 1988, 8vo, pp. xv, 106, £4.95 (paperback).

This excellent introduction to voluntarism appears at an opportune moment. After a long period of decline voluntary agencies are once again capturing attention. The virtues of voluntarism are being extolled by our political masters to undermine public confidence in collectivism, while voluntary action has also emerged as a major defence mechanism among the advocates of the institutions of the welfare state. Frank Prochaska shows that voluntarism only momentarily declined. His review of events from the eighteenth century to the present draws attention to the common features of voluntary effort throughout this period, and he suggests that this activity serves an important bonding function in local communities, as well as providing for more dramatic pressure-group initiatives on a national scale.

The diversity and complexity of voluntarism create formidable difficulties for the author of a short introductory survey, especially when a broad chronological framework is adopted. The organizations considered by Prochaska range from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1698) to the recently-founded AIDS charities. Significantly, the SPCK and many other venerable charities have persisted to the present, usually in amalgamations, or with changes