

## Book Reviews

**Peter Bartrip**, *Themselves writ large: the British Medical Association 1832–1966*, London, BMJ Publishing Group, pp. xviii, 373, £29.95 (0-7279-0998-3).

Peter Bartrip's history of the BMA is a welcome and valuable addition to the literature dealing with the history of medicine in Britain, for, as the author points out in his preface, previous histories of the BMA have serious flaws as works of history. This work is based on a thorough and systematic examination of the Association's archive; shedding light on its internal workings, but firmly set in the broader contexts of medical and social history. It is organized as a chronological account from the inception of the Association by Charles Hastings in Worcester in 1832 to the negotiations over the Charter for the Family Doctor Service ending in 1966. The Association's archive is vast, but Bartrip has managed to steer the course between over-simplification and excessive detail. The temptation to bring the account any nearer the present has also been resisted, since it would have been far harder to maintain the objectivity with which the personalities and politics of the Association's work are handled. Bartrip has evidently been at pains to maintain this objectivity, and devotes most of his preface to a defensive discussion of David Cantor's view that commissioned histories (of which this is in some ways an example) are prone to be self-congratulatory and lacking in analytical or contextual insights (D Cantor, 'Contracting cancer? The politics of commissioned histories', *Soc. Hist. Med.*, 1992, 5: 131–42).

The book is useful not only in the specific areas of the Association's history which it clarifies, but generally, by virtue of its thoroughness, serves as a caveat for those seeking to bring the views or actions of the BMA into a historical account. The account Bartrip makes draws out the tensions and interplay between the central clique, and later the paid secretariat of the BMA, the Council,

and the Annual Representative Meeting in the development of the Association. He repeatedly demonstrates that the *British Medical Journal* cannot be equated with the Association; articles and views found in the *BMJ* have often been diametrically opposed to the views and plans of the Representative body, or Council. Even the Annual Representative Meeting, since 1902 the policy-making body of the BMA, cannot be taken to represent the views of all members. Bartrip's account often appraises contemporary or subsequent judgements that the Association had failed or succeeded, and concludes that most frequently it simply survived and changed to meet each new challenge, whether from within itself, from other medical bodies, or from outside the profession. The Association has nearly always been severely criticized by both members and non-members, and the secret of its longevity could be seen as the continuing knack of absorbing these criticisms.

There are times however when the reader could wish for a little more breadth. For instance some comparison with the institutional histories of other professional bodies would have been useful. The book deals mainly with general practice, and says remarkably little about hospital medicine, and it is not clear if this is a deliberate choice or not. The only serious criticism of the book must be that it is sometimes hard to tell exactly where quotations are taken from. For instance Bartrip's historiography of the Association frequently refers to the view of Stephen Lock, a former Editor of the *BMJ*, that the early Association was little more than a "gentleman's club", but we never learn where this was expressed.

In marked contrast to the attractive presentation of the author's previous volume (P Bartrip, *Mirror of medicine: a history of the British Medical Journal 1840–1990*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990), this book has no illustrations, and a number of typographical errors. Given the high quality of the writing, it is

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very sad that the BMJ Publishing Group has presented this work in such a dry format—as it stands one wonders if it will have found its way into many medical Christmas stockings. This is a shame, since this is certainly not a self-congratulatory, self-referential history, and deserves a wide readership both within and outside the history of medicine community.

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*Springer-Verlag: History of a scientific publishing house*, **Heinz Sarkowski**, *Part 1, 1842–1945: Foundation, maturation, adversity, 1842–1945*, transl. Gerald Graham; **Heinz Götze**, *Part 2, 1945–1992: Rebuilding, opening frontiers, securing the future*, transl. Mary Schäfer, Berlin and Heidelberg, Springer-Verlag, 1996, pt 1, pp. xviii, 448, illus.; pt 2, pp. xxvi, 416, illus., £58.00, DM 124.00 (3-540-61744-2).

For most English-speaking historians “Springer-Verlag” is indelibly associated with two things: science and medical periodicals, and the creation of Robert Maxwell’s Pergamon Press. The latter emerged in 1946 as a consequence of Springer’s far-sighted effort to enter the British (and so, international) publishing market through partnership with Butterworths, the legal and scientific publishers. From the assets of this failed partnership (including three Springer periodicals) Maxwell created his post-war empire. This matter is dealt with only briefly and circumspectly in the second volume of this substantial and excellently illustrated history that celebrates 150 years of Germany’s largest and most important scientific and medical publishing house.

Like Michael Faraday, the firm’s founder, Julius Springer (1847–77), was apprenticed to a bookbinder and bookseller in Berlin before *Wanderjahre*, learning the book trade in Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Strasbourg, Zurich and Paris. When he returned to Berlin in 1842 he established a bookshop that dealt in “domestic and foreign literature”, and published a small number of short-lived political periodicals (it

being the revolutionary *vor-März* period), children’s books and school textbooks, to which pharmacy and forestry books were added as specialisms from 1851. (Forestry science loomed large in the first fifty years of the firm’s development; here is a significant discipline hitherto ignored by historians of German science and its universities.) The bookshop was sold in 1858, when the firm committed itself entirely to publishing. Two sons, Ferdinand (1846–1906), trained like his father as a bookseller, and Fritz (1850–1944), a graduate engineer, added science, medicine and technology to the firm’s specialities; but it was the two grandsons, Ferdinand jr (1881–1965) and Julius jr (1880–1968), who transformed the family business into Germany’s leading science publisher and who made it an international post-war success.

How this was achieved is dealt with in scholarly detail by Heinz Sarkowski in the first volume, based upon the firm’s rich collection of surviving records. Eduard Vieweg at Braunschweig was probably the first German publisher to see that there was a growing market for science books and periodicals, and he had cultivated the chemists Justus Liebig and Hermann Kolbe as advisers. In emulation, the Springer family’s ploy was to identify a man of science as an editor of a new journal and then encourage him to author texts as well as acting as a talent spotter. For example, in 1859 the firm launched the important weekly *Pharmazeutische Centralhalle für Deutschland* under the editorship of the pharmaceutical chemist Hermann Hager. Within a few years, this led to the production of a pharmaceutical calendar and yearbook and a series of monographs by Hager on elementary pharmacy, pharmaceutical chemistry, microscopy, as well as the important *Handbuch der pharmazeutischen Praxis* (1875–78). Although not a new concept, the firm was to enjoy particular success in publishing “Handbooks” that summarized existing knowledge in pharmacy, engineering and, from the 1880s, medicine.

Once Robert Koch’s Imperial Health Department began to use Springer for its