

## Book Reviews

the historical study of medicine in this country. The book is based upon some lectures which he delivered at the University of California in 1962. These he has now considerably augmented and amplified.

Gout is a disease of great antiquity. It is mentioned in the Hippocratic *Corpus*. Aretaeus of Cappadocia recognized its hereditary character. Cosimo de Medici, the Emperor Charles V and his son, Philip II of Spain, Lord Burghley, Robert Cecil, Edward Gibbon and Benjamin Franklin were some notable sufferers. So too were many physicians, including the elder Scaliger, Girolamo Cardano, William Harvey and Thomas Sydenham. Dr. Copeman traces the steps of progressive knowledge of the malady, its anatomy, pathology, symptomatology and treatment by colchicum and other drugs through the work of Todd, Bichat, Sir Alfred Garrod, Sir William Roberts and other physicians of the nineteenth century up to its recognition as a separate and specific biochemical disorder.

Both acute and chronic rheumatism were frequently confused with gout; and, even in the present century, 'rheumatic gout' was still diagnosed by some practitioners, although, in the seventeenth century, Sydenham and Boerhaave distinguished acute rheumatism from 'the allied disease, Gout and the Scurvy'. Cullen in 1776 described 'acute rheumatic polyarthritis', and in 1802 William Heberden observed that acute rheumatism was largely a disease of childhood. Pitcairn, Matthew Baillie and Jenner early observed the close association of heart disease with rheumatic fever. Chapter VIII of this book on 'Acute Rheumatism and Chorea' ably summarizes the history of the subject.

Rheumatoid arthritis (Chapter IX) has also a long pedigree. Its ravages can be detected in skeletons of the ancient Egyptians and Nubians, and it was known to Hippocrates. The history of the disease is traced up to the present day, and the chapter includes brief references to gonorrhoeal rheumatism and tuberculous arthritis. Chapter X treats of the history of ankylosing spondylitis; Chapter XI of osteoarthritis; and Chapter XII (the final chapter) of non-articular rheumatism ('Fibrositis'). This is an excellent history of a complex, difficult and crippling group of diseases.

A. S. MACNALTY

*Medical History from the Earliest Times* (Reprint of 1894 edition), by Edward Theodore Withington, London, The Holland Press, 1964, pp. viii, 424, 63s (\$10.00).

Edward T. Withington published this book in 1894 'in the hope that it may form a not unwelcome contribution to a neglected department of medical literature', and during the intervening seventy years its popularity as a short history of medicine has been maintained. Its scarcity and value have in the last few years been reflected in the high prices asked in booksellers' catalogues. This reprint is therefore to be welcomed, despite the fact that no attempt to bring the book up to date has been made; only the original frontispiece is missing.

Although the author ends with Bichat and so does not deal with any of the nineteenth century, his handling of the periods up to 1800 are characterized by accuracy of statement, by precise historical perspective which emphasizes the central figures and relegates their satellites to compendious summaries, and by impeccable documentation. As none of the modern short histories of medicine satisfy all these criteria, the publishers were fully justified in producing this reprint.

However, a great amount of scholarly research in medical history has been carried out since 1894, and a number of Withington's interpretations are no longer valid.

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New knowledge has in particular changed our ideas concerning, amongst others, pre-Greek medicine, certain aspects of medieval medicine, Paracelsus, and Vesalius and his predecessors. The writing of history too has changed considerably. But if the defects are realized, this book can still be of use to the modern reader. Its value could, however, have been greatly enhanced by bringing the literature up to date, by adding critical comments, or by adding a new introduction to draw attention to the outmoded sections.

This resurrection should remind us that occasionally it would be better to rehabilitate or translate an old work rather than to clog today's literature with books that in much less than seventy years will be forgotten for ever.

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