

### Book Reviews

After a brief period of teaching in Australia, during which he spent more time and effort on his own education than on that of his pupils, Ellis returned to England. His adolescence was painful and difficult, and while continuing his self-education by omnivorous reading, he was involved with a succession of intellectual oddities. He was compounded of contradictory paradoxes and shyness, and, being unable to reveal to the world 'the wonderful beautiful soul in him', he was usually misunderstood. Furthermore, he became aware of his own sexual inadequacy. At the age of twenty-two years he took up medicine and seven years later qualified by means of the L.S.A. From now until his death in 1939, he devoted his life to the physiology, psychology and pathology of sex, and in his career is to be found the recent history of sexual knowledge and the changing social attitude to it. There were five women of importance in his life, only one of whom he married. Convinced of his own limitations, he did not experience the happiness and normal relationships about which he wrote so eloquently and at such length until he was over sixty. He spent his old age in happy and productive contentment, being described once as 'like a great, deep well full of wisdom and beauty'.

Mr. Calder-Marshall has written an excellent biography although he admits there is no attempt to appraise the literary and scientific work. Much help was given by Ellis's literary executor—the lady with whom he spent the last twenty-three years of his life—and, after considerable labour the biographer was able to achieve contact with an elusive and mystical genius. In his usual engaging style he takes us through the philosophical and psychological complexities of what on the whole was a rather dull life, painlessly and pleasantly. The last chapter is particularly skilful and effective. He concludes the book with a bibliography, a short list of books about Ellis and an adequate index.

This work is an outstanding contribution to the history of sexology as illustrated by the life of its most famous exponent. We are, however, too close in time to evaluate adequately and appreciate fully this most interesting man. Was he a genius or was he a maladjusted but fearless crusader described by some as a bore? If Osler is correct in saying that 'history is the biography of the mind of man, and its educational value is in direct proportion to the completeness of our study of the individuals through whom this mind has been manifested', the life and work of Havelock Ellis will provide much more work for future historians.

EDWIN CLARKE

*Royal College of Surgeons of England: A History.* SIR ZACHARY COPE. London: Anthony Blond, 1959; pp. xii + 360. Illustrated. 63s.

This is the first time that an authentic history has been written about the origin and development of the Royal College of Surgeons up to the present time. The text is interesting, informative, often amusing and makes excellent reading. It is freely illustrated with many portraits.

Beginning with the breakaway from the Barber Surgeons the author discusses and describes such things as the astonishing attacks on the College by the Editor of the *Lancet*, the constant trouble with the Members, the foundation of the Fellowship and its examinations with an amusing account by a candidate of the first Final examination, the birth of the Dental profession, the fight for the admission of women to the examinations of the College, the immense developments after the end of each of the two world wars when the College advanced from the status of an examining body

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possessing a unique museum and a fine library to that of an internationally important post-graduate teaching centre associated with a finely equipped and well-staffed research institute, all this in spite of the disastrous bombing of 1941.

In addition there are interesting chapters on the Library by W. R. Le Fanu and on John Hunter's Museum by Jessie Dobson. Finally there are more than a hundred short biographies.

The book abounds in curious sidelights. The reader can find how the Company of Surgeons had at one time to pay an audience to attend the anatomical lectures of its own professor; how and why, when a newly elected member of the Council attends his first meeting he is presented with an envelope containing one pound note and one shilling; how the Members at one time were not allowed to use the main front entrance to the College, but had to use an insignificant back door in Portugal Street; how election to the panel of examiners and Council was for too long a lifetime appointment; how one President was essentially a physician but a poor surgeon; how another President burned John Hunter's unpublished manuscripts after, it is said, using material from them in his own writings.

Great names fill the pages, Cheselden, Pott, Astley Cooper, Brodie, Moynihan and Webb-Johnson to name only a few. Even Lister who was not very welcome there finds a place. Sir Zachary has done his work splendidly.

WILLIAM BROCKBANK

*A Way of Life and other Selected Writings of Sir William Osler.* With an introduction by G. L. KEYNES, M.D., F.R.C.S. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1958; pp. xx+278. Illustrated. \$1.50.

The current criticism that most scientists learn little or nothing of the humanities, applies also to the medical practitioner. The medical student not only labours under the burden of an overloaded curriculum, but he also faces the ever-increasing technicality and complexity of advancing medicine with little or no help, in this country at any rate, from teachers of the history of medicine. How then is he to promote at least some contact with the more humanistic aspect of his education, so important to him in his future devotion to people?

A small contribution to the solution of this problem was offered in 1951 when *Selected Writings of Sir William Osler* was published specially for the student by a committee of the Osler Club and introduced by Sir Geoffrey Keynes. The essays thought most likely to appeal to, and to be of value to, the student and younger members of the profession were carefully chosen. Osler's multitudinous contributions to clinical medicine and pathology do not appear, but rather we find essays which illustrate his historical, philosophical and bibliographical endeavours.

This book has now been reproduced in the United States of America under a new title taken from one of the most important essays. There has been no alteration in the text which is well produced; the illustrations are likewise identical, though lacking some of their original clarity; it has a soft back and the price is very reasonable.

The reviewers of the British publication gave just praise to the wise selection of the contents, but it is perhaps surprising that Osler's essay *The Master-word in Medicine*, addressed to the students of his *alma mater*, the University of Toronto, in 1903, and his suggestions for a *Bed Side Library for Medical Students* have been omitted.

This volume, together with Dr. R. E. Verney's recent anthology *The Student Life, The Philosophy of Sir William Osler*, present 'the young man's friend' to the student