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young, there are purple patches and youthful vanities in his writing. Not for him the advice of Samuel Johnson to the effect that if ever you write a passage of which you are particularly proud, strike it out. For all that, the diaries are very readable and one grows fond of young Wright as he records every conceivable detail of his hopes and ambitions, what he had to eat, how he dressed for various occasions, and how he spent most of his days visiting patients on horseback with all the hazards, troubles and occasional joys of this form of transport. Much of his practice was amongst the mining villages which suffered from a horrifying number of serious accidents. He is at his best when describing how he dealt with such surgical cases and I have learnt more about the ordinary everyday work of a provincial surgeon in the 1820s from this diary than from any other source. He was much less confident when dealing with medical cases. From the way he writes, I have little doubt that he was, incidentally, unusually kind and considerate to his patients.

It was customary for apprentices on a five-year apprenticeship to spend a "session" attending lectures and demonstrations at a medical school. Wright went to Edinburgh for this purpose and his account of what he did and what he saw is fascinating.

The diary was written as a series of separate volumes, which turned up in British Columbia and were donated to the City of Newcastle upon Tyne. A few of the volumes were missing but a new one has just been found, too late, sadly, to be included in this book. But I hope it may appear as a separate paper.

Alastair Johnson has done a considerable service to the history of medicine by the long and arduous work of transcribing this diary, by his excellent introduction and detailed but unobtrusive editing and footnoting, and an excellent index. For those who love the primary sources of

medical history this really is a gem of a book.

Irvine Loudon,
Oxford

Gabrielle Hatfield, *Memory, wisdom and healing: the history of domestic plant medicine*, Thrupp, Sutton Publishing, 1999, pp. ix, 209, illus., £25.00, US\$36.00 (0-7509-1945-0).

Gabrielle Hatfield has gathered together an extraordinarily valuable resource pertaining to domestic medicine in Britain from around 1700 to the present. Her book mainly covers folk knowledge of plant remedies, much of it passed down by word of mouth. Unable completely to discard the printed tradition which provides records of many of her sources, she concentrates on fragments of poetry, proverbs, recipe books, songs and evidence of vernacular practice as written by the educated about the uneducated. The intention, as she states in the introduction, is to provide some account of the ordinary do-it-yourself medicine practised by the ordinary person in Britain. This is not an easy task and she is to be congratulated on the intelligent synthesis she has managed to supply.

The history of domestic medicine has largely been ignored precisely because of the difficulty of collecting adequate materials. It takes a determined historian to pursue the self-treatment of ill-identified conditions by herbs invariably described in a local vernacular. Once collected, there are the difficulties of collating disparate, mainly anecdotal data distributed over a broad geographical territory and timespan. Hatfield's account is full of proper scholarly caution. She is currently a Wingate Scholar at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and formerly was a Wellcome research fellow at the University of East Anglia, researching domestic plant remedies for which she won

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the Michaelis-Jena Ratcliffe Prize for Folklore in 1993.

Some interesting generalizations emerge: the difference commonly understood between the medicinal activity of roots as opposed to shoots or leaves; the multiple uses of a single plant; the disdain for polypharmacy. In passing, Hatfield argues that the doctrine of signatures was unlikely to be much used by country dwellers in the form proposed by Paracelsus. She suggests instead that signatures emerged by reverse osmosis, so to speak, in that it would be only natural to seek a memorable feature of a plant that helped specific conditions. The yellow bark of the barberry might serve as a mnemonic that the plant itself (not the bark) was useful for jaundice. Elsewhere Hatfield proposes that the magical, mythic elements attached to this form of vernacular and domestic knowledge arose not so much through self-medication but rather crystallized around those people in a community usually referred to as healers.

All this is illuminating, a salutary message that the history of medicine is largely a history of learned medicine that leaves the common experience of plant lore and plant use relatively undocumented.

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Christian Bonah, *Instruire, guérir, servir. Formation, recherche et pratique médicales en France et en Allemagne pendant la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle*, Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2000, pp. 623, €22.87 (paperback 2-86820-122-9).

The first duty of any reviewer is, of course, to give credit where credit is due. In this instance, the author deserves generous praise for an uncommon effort to construct a scholarly account based not only on an impressive array of archival sources but also

a wide and accurate survey of secondary literature in three languages. This comparative treatment of Franco-German medical institutions in the late nineteenth century originates fittingly in Strassburg, rather than in Paris, since Christian Bonah's immediate focus is Alsace and Lorraine in the years following the war of 1870. Specifically, he concentrates on the installation of new medical faculties at Nancy and (for nearly fifty years thereafter) Strassburg. The result is a thick and substantial volume that merits the attention of his fellow researchers, especially but (one hopes) not exclusively in medical history.

The book works best as a monograph. In his finest pages Bonah convincingly analyses the similarities and differences between the two nascent medical schools. Programatically he rejects an approach that would rate one as superior to the other, but much of his evidence suggests the weakness of Nancy relative to its trans-Vosgesian rival. That imbalance begins with the fact that Berlin accorded the Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität in Strassburg a budget ten times that of its French counterpart. Accordingly, the former fitted into a pattern in which Germany could boast of more medical facilities, more professors, more students, better physical plants, and greater international prestige. Above all, before 1914, German medicine attained a far higher degree of specialization in the care of patients and in research. For these reasons, *malgré lui*, Bonah describes Strassburg as a "showcase" (*vitrine*) for a dominant German science, whereas Nancy retained a more modest role as an observatory and medical liaison between the nations. He thereby acknowledges that a scientific "gap" (*décalage*) was opening, of which his two examples are illustrative.

In his attempts to generalize from the monographic evidence, Bonah encounters a number of methodological problems. He fails to adopt a clear order of presentation, creating some confusion and undue redundancy. His treatment of the general