

Book Reviews

The General Infirmary at Leeds: Vol II—The Second Hundred Years, (1869-1965), by S. T. ANNING, Edinburgh and London, E. & S. Livingstone, 1966, pp. xii, 188, illus., 42s.

This volume appears, as was hoped, in good time for the Infirmary's bicentenary in 1967. During the period covered, the institution has been on its present site, though the latter has naturally been much enlarged, and the buildings considerably elaborated, since the opening of the 'New' Infirmary in 1869. The last chapter deals in outline with the bold plans envisaged for the future, when a site enlarged to 43 acres will provide a magnificent hospital medical school campus contiguous with that of the university. Even so, so rapidly do the demands for more doctors appear to outstrip even the most far-sighted plans, that it seems likely that increasing use will have to be made of St. James's Hospital, a former municipal institution which, owing to wisdom and foresight in the inter-war period, is already sharing to a considerable extent in the teaching work of the Leeds Medical School.

As in the previous volume, the story of the Infirmary is not presented entirely chronologically, but rather as a series of semi-independent essays dealing with the nursing services, buildings, the rise of the specialties, relations between the Infirmary and the Medical School, and so on. And somehow one seems to get in this way a more real picture of the growth of an institution than would be obtained by a more stereotyped presentation. The difficulty in the airing of the water-closets that was previously noted had been succeeded (in 1890) by complaint of their chilliness, one patient being said to have developed rheumatic fever as a result. And a problem that must be unusual in the hospital world had to be faced when in 1941 'the Moynihan Memorial had again been disfigured by lipstick.' The advice of Sir William Reid Dick himself had to be obtained, apparently with ultimate success, though it was later deemed wise to protect the Memorial by plate-glass. It is notable that the Chantrey bust of William Hey (the first), which also stands in the Entrance Hall of the Infirmary, has attracted no such scandalous attacks. (On a recent visit to Leeds, the reviewer noted that the bust appears now to be housed in the Consultants' cloakroom.)

As was promised, a biographical Appendix is now provided covering the whole period of the hospital's existence and including not only consulting medical staff (unless still living) but also certain laymen who have done outstanding work for the institution. Especially on the surgical side, this sounds like a master-roll of some of the most famous names in English medicine over the last two centuries.

This book is a labour of love whose scholarship is beyond question—so much so that the mis-spelling on page 54 gives a shock out of proportion to the triviality of the error.

J. G. MCCRIE

Selected papers of John Shaw Billings, Compiled with a life of Billings, by F.B. ROGERS, Chicago, Medical Library Association, 1965 pp. vi, 300, \$6.00.

This book is published one hundred years after an event of the utmost significance in the history of medical libraries. On 31st December, 1864, Dr. John Shaw Billings—graduate of the Ohio Medical College, Cincinnati, veteran of the Civil War and participant in two of its bloodiest battles, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg—was

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appointed to the Surgeon-General's Office and given special responsibility for its library of 1800 books. The rest of his life, apart from the final eighteen years when he was Director of the New York Public Library, was devoted to building up a paltry collection into a library fit to stand comparison with the best in Europe. Out of his labours was born the Army Medical Library (now situated at Bethesda and retitled the National Library of Medicine).

Billings was a cultured man, educated in the classics, self-trained in foreign languages, fluent with the pen and eloquent withal. He was a visionary, and libraries were central to his visions. For lack of good medical libraries he had been forced to labour unnecessarily over his M.D. thesis on epilepsy, and this experience he never forgot. Not that hard work frightened him; it was more a disgust at having to waste time in frustrated effort when a ready supply of books would have liberated him for more productive labour. This produced in him an intense jealousy of the medical library resources in foreign capitals and a determination to place America on an equal footing. By carefully cultivating contacts all over the world—in places as far apart as Manchester and Tokyo—he succeeded in obtaining for his library an unrivalled collection of nineteenth-century medical imprints and much more besides; but his even more astonishing achievement was an index to their contents—books and periodicals—which we all know today as the *Surgeon General's Index Catalogue* and which sadly ceased publication only a few years ago. The full story of Billings is of course available in the biography written by Garrison, his successor; it is also briefly told in the preface to this anthology edited by Dr. F. Rogers, a later incumbent of the post of librarian.

Dr. Rogers has selected 24 papers from the 171 written by Billings. They deal mainly with medical bibliography, but a short excerpt from a paper on vital statistics reminds us of other facets to Billings' career. In fact, nothing could illustrate better the foresight of the man than his suggestion to Herman Hollerith that 'there ought to be a machine for doing the purely mechanical work of tabulating population and similar statistics'. If he were alive today computers would hold no terrors for him.

Times have changed since Billings was lamenting (1891, 'Ideals of medical education') his country's shortage of first-class anatomists, pathologists and physiologists; he estimated that not more than a dozen of each lived in America. Low standards in medical schools are a recurring theme in his addresses; and quite naturally he incurred the displeasure of not a few who had qualified 'over eighty gates, a number of turnstiles, and a good deal of . . . unenclosed common'. But he was a practical man who believed in the creative function of criticism, and his practicality was evident in his plans (accepted) for the new Johns Hopkins Hospital.

The paper which will probably interest medical historians most is entitled 'A century of American medicine, 1776 to 1876'—for its peculiar mixture of exhortation and historical judgements. The only fields of medical endeavour in which he adjudged nineteenth-century America to have won laurels were vital statistics and the study of tropical diseases; no mention of anaesthesia! Rush gains mention solely on account of his book on 'diseases of the mind, which contains some original observations of interest'. With the exception of Isaac Ray (*Contributions to mental pathology*, 1873) American psychiatric literature is dismissed as 'ontological speculation'. Another paper

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based on thorough documentation and of continuing use in medical libraries is a list of early American journals conveniently grouped under state-names; amongst them is a title curiously unnoticed in Austin's *Early American Medical Imprints*, that of the first medical journal published in the United States about 1790, a translation from the French (*Journal of the practice of medicine . . . in the military hospitals of France*) of which only one part appeared.

E. GASKELL

Albrecht von Haller—Marc Antonio Caldani. Briefwechsel 1756-1776, ed. by ERICH HINTZSCHE, Berne and Stuttgart, Hans Huber, 1966, pp. 257, S.Fr. 22.80.

Albrecht von Haller published himself a part of his correspondence with contemporary scholars in six volumes. But he omitted any passages that might cause offence, be they of a personal nature or on controversial scientific theories. The first to fill in the gaps was H. Sigerist who in 1923 published Haller's letters to Gesner. In 1961 P. de Pietro published Haller's correspondence with Spallanzani. The year 1964 saw two publications of Haller letters: F. Berg published his correspondence with Rosen von Rosenstein, and E. Hintzsche his letters to Morgagni. In 1965 Hintzsche published Haller's letters to Ignazio Somis, and A. Simili, the correspondence with James Plancus, i.e. G. Bianchi of Rimini. There exists as yet no definitive biography of Haller.

This correspondence with a difficult young colleague shows Haller from his most benign side. As a Roman Catholic Caldani had little hope of securing a university chair in Germany where he turned after lack of success in his own country. Haller comforts and helps him and, apart from a wealth of detail about the scientific work of both, we hear much about the scramble for university chairs in Italy and elsewhere, and about the personal and scholarly antagonisms of such people as Morgagni and Fontana. Haller proves a staunch friend in all the troubles assailing Caldani who seems to have been gauche and tactless and helps him even to achieve his life's ambition: to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

MARIANNE WINDER

Las ciencias médicas en Guatemala. Origen y evolución, by CARLOS MARTÍNEZ DURÁN, 3rd ed. Guatemala, Editorial Universitaria, 1964, pp. 710, illus.

The interest in this standard medical history of Guatemala is indicated by the fact that the previous editions of 1941 and 1945 are now out of print. The chapters devoted to the pre-Columbian period have now been enlarged with an entirely new text and many illustrations, and the colonial section condensed. The study on Flores, the outstanding medical figure of Guatemala, has been enriched with recently discovered information. Martínez Durán, formerly Rector of Guatemala's University, promises to follow up his excellent text with a study of Guatemalan medicine in the present century.

F. GUERRA