

Book Reviews

TEIZO OGAWA (editor), *History of the professionalization of medicine: Proceedings of the 3rd International Symposium on the Comparative History of Medicine—East and West*, Osaka, The Taniguchi Foundation, 1987, 8vo, pp. x, 187, [no price stated], (paperback).

Although this is the third in a series of volumes based on the annual Taniguchi International Symposia, its successors, volumes four through nine, have already appeared. The meeting from which this collection of essays is drawn took place in 1978. The foreword provides no explanation for this unusually long delay in publication; possibly the death of the principal organizer Professor Ogawa was a contributory factor.

Is the collection still to be welcomed after such a passage of time? Despite the fact that no attempt has been made to update the essays—their bibliographies contain no references to works published after 1978—the response of this reader is guardedly in the affirmative. The broad comparative perspective that the volume embodies is valuable in itself and some of the essays contain material not as readily accessible elsewhere.

One of the most interesting and informative essays is by F. P. Liwoski on the emergence of the 'barefoot doctor' in China. One might quibble that this topic sits rather uneasily within the theme of the conference, for it is at least arguable that the rise of the barefoot doctor represents a de-professionalization of medicine, rather than the opposite. Nevertheless, Liwoski's survey provides a useful introduction to this intriguing development in the social history of health care. One of the essays of greatest interest to teachers of medical history will be John Pickstone's on 'The professionalization of medicine in England'. The author sets out, in quite a concise form, what is in effect the framework of the investigations which he and his associates in Manchester have successfully undertaken in the intervening decade. Not all the contributions to this volume are of a uniformly high standard but I also enjoyed David McQueen on chiropractic in America, Francis Zimmerman on classical medicine in India, and Paul Unschuld on medical ethics in Imperial China.

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S. M. LAIRD, *My life before penicillin*, Brauton, Devon, Merlin Books, 1988, 8vo, pp. 491, illus., £14.95.

The onset of blindness in retirement led the author to learn to type, and the book is a product of this new-found skill. This intimation in his preface prepares us for ready recognition of the boy and man whose tale follows.

Born in 1911, the son of a Scottish country GP, he coped with the death of his mother in his early teens. He survived as the youngest in a male household of four and commuted daily by train for more than a decade to school, University, and teaching hospitals in Glasgow. As a boy his main extra-curricular interest was sport. Running and tennis attracted him and he developed a life-long passion for rugby. In spite of the all-pervading gloom of Glasgow in the Great Depression, he enjoyed his medical student days, graduating in the spring of 1934.

As we follow him through his housemanships, all but one in Liverpool, to his choice of speciality, we can only be astonished at his capacity for work. No opportunity to learn was lost. In his last year, in a non-resident post in venereology, he capitalized on his accumulating knowledge and experience by acquiring in the twelvemonth an MD, a Fellowship of the Glasgow College of Physicians and Surgeons, and a DPH. His six years in the wartime Royal Army Medical Corps finally saw him as Western Command Venereologist, in which post his precisely organized research proved the infectious nature of a second form of hepatitis. Within a few years syringe-transmitted jaundice was recognized world-wide, and prevented.

The writing is immaculate. It flows crystal clear and is a joy to read. The intermittent drama is well controlled and the understatements are masterly. Wit abounds in infinite variety—pawky, circuitous and at times pert. This skill in penmanship, together with his wide range of interests, from archaeology to the processes of law, reveal why Dr Laird was chosen to be the editor of the *British Journal of Venereal Diseases* and why he distinguished himself in that office for fifteen years. The book is a history book for tomorrow. When, in a hundred years or two, medical