

Book Reviews

Professor of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, his colleagues found it necessary to pass a rule that "no visiting chief could perform an autopsy except on a case from his own ward". Osler's enthusiasm for autopsies never diminished. Even as Regius Professor at Oxford, Osler could not resist the urge to roll up his sleeves and take part in a post-mortem dissection.

The author of this book, Dr. Rodin, a former Professor of Pathology at the University of Texas, brings out these points well. The book consists of four distinct sections. First, a fair summary of Osler's career, stressing the many aspects related to pathology and describing in some detail his early visits to Europe to study the basic medical sciences with Virchow in Berlin and Burdon Sanderson in University College London, among others. This section also includes the long story ending with the final preservation of the fifty-five specimens which form the display in the Osler Museum at the McGill Pathology Institute, Montreal.

Second, there is an assessment of the significance of these specimens in relation to medical knowledge of the time. Over half of the specimens are of heart disease. Although Osler did not make any new discoveries or conduct experiments in this field, he played a significant part in popularizing and developing current ideas on heart disease. The book refers to his Gulstonian (*sic*) Lectures on Malignant Endocarditis delivered at the Royal College of Physicians of London in 1885. The earlier intestinal specimens date from the time when the typhoid bacillus had just been discovered, so it is not surprising that his description of this disease does not mention this but concentrates on gross pathology.

The third section of the book is a complete series of photographic reproductions of the mounted specimens; and the fourth section consists of Osler's autopsy records of ten of the specimens, taken from his original handwritten reports together with some of the clinical case histories.

The text of this book is easy to read, full of facts and plentiful references. But for a book that calls itself an atlas of museum specimens, the quality of the illustrations is very poor, some of them being hardly recognizable even when accompanied by a detailed description. Most of the illustrations have been obscured by photographing the specimens in glass jars unskillfully illuminated.

The book, though hard-covered, is badly bound. But these defects will not put off a dedicated Osler enthusiast.

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ROGER FINLAY, *Population and metropolis. The demography of London 1580-1650*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. xii, 188, £22.50.

This is the first full study of London's population at any time before the industrial revolution, and the first serious monograph in English on the demography of any major pre-industrial city. It will therefore be welcomed by all urban and demographic historians. Scholars had previously been deterred from attempting such a work by the sheer volume of surviving materials, principally parish registers, and by the difficulty of analysing them, given the mobility of urban populations in the past. Dr. Finlay has overcome the first problem by sampling: he has studied in particular detail four parishes in different parts of the city and of different social composition. He overcomes the second problem even more triumphantly, by showing that techniques of family reconstitution can be adapted to apply to urban parish registers, and that the results can be extraordinarily revealing if they are compared with model life tables.

Much of the book is necessarily concerned with these matters of methodology and source-criticism, since they are the foundation on which its important conclusions rest. Among other things, Dr. Finlay demonstrates that mortality rates were high in early modern London, but not as high as in some contemporary continental cities, or in some nineteenth-century towns. Marital fertility rates were also unusually high. But the overall birth rate was reduced by high proportions of unmarried apprentices and servants, and it was never high enough to allow the population to grow naturally. The city depended on continuous and heavy immigration.

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Medical historians will find the chapter on plague epidemics of particular interest. Dr. Finlay shows how epidemic death rates varied with location, social status, age, and (least easily explained) sex; and he stresses in a telling conclusion that London's demography depended more on the "background" level of mortality than on these occasional critical years, despite their dramatic effects. Here and elsewhere, he succeeds in illuminating some of the most fundamental features of London at a time when it was becoming the greatest metropolis in Europe.

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PHILIP CASH, ERIC H. CHRISTIANSON, and J. WORTH ESTES (editors), *Medicine in Colonial Massachusetts, 1620–1820. A Conference Held 25–26 May 1978 by the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, Boston, The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1980, pp. xxiii, 425, illus., \$25.00.

This volume's paradoxical title, which identifies the colonial period in Massachusetts with the years from 1620 to 1820, reflects one of the leading constraints placed upon the colonial medical historian's endeavour. The few extant sources from the bulk of the colonial period have been exhaustively studied; documentation is extensive only from the 1740s, and abundant only after 1760. Further exacerbating this problem is the fact that unlike Philadelphia, in Massachusetts, or more particularly in Boston, medical institutions such as schools and societies that conventionally provide grist for the historian's mill were almost entirely founded only after the Revolutionary War, for reasons that Whitfield J. Bell jr., and G. B. Warden skilfully explicate in their studies. Accordingly, many of the fifteen essays that comprise this collection not only needlessly recount knowledge that is commonplace, but also deal almost exclusively with the period after 1775, and strictly speaking are not colonial history at all.

Three essays obviate these problems by exploiting new categories of sources using demographic and quantitative analysis. Douglas Jones's study of the sick poor and the practitioners who attended them in eighteenth-century Essex County is plainly the outstanding piece of the volume. Based largely upon court and town records, it incorporates the techniques and ideas of the best of colonial American historiography. Using similar records, as well as church registers, Eric Christianson's discussion of the demographic, educational, and economic characteristics of Massachusetts' practitioners is extracted from the longer study that is his dissertation; it is unlikely that anyone else could coax more information out of the sources he has mined. J. Worth Estes's contribution pivots upon an analysis of four physicians' manuscript account books and ledgers. Although his study is drawn from a limited number of sources, it provides intriguing insights into eighteenth-century therapeutic practice by pointing to the similarities and differences among his practitioners in their uses of the *materia medica*.

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GUSTAV HENNINGSEN, *The witches' advocate. Basque witchcraft and the Spanish Inquisition (1609–1614)*, Reno, Nevada, University of Nevada Press, 1980, 8vo, pp. xxix, 607, \$24.00.

This fascinating book makes an extremely important contribution to the history both of the European witch-craze and of the Spanish Inquisition. The "witches' advocate" was Alonso de Salazar Frías, one of the three inquisitors at Logroño, in the North of Spain. The importance of this inquisitor's sane and sceptical investigations into an outbreak, lasting from 1609 to 1614, of witch-accusations in the Basque region, has long been known, from C. H. Lea's *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages* (1888), and quite recently from Julio Caro Baroja's *The world of the witches* (1964); but Henningsen, a Danish folklorist, has discovered an enormous wealth of documents in the archives of the Inquisition in Madrid, which enable him to trace in the greatest detail the history both of this witch-panic and of the gradual development in the *Suprema* (the central tribunal of the Spanish Inquisition, in Madrid) of a sceptical attitude towards accusa-