

Book Reviews

Wildberger became a renowned local figure and received an honorary medical doctorate from Jena and many foreign honours. In later life he moved his institute to Forchheim, where he had the assistance of his medically-qualified son before the latter emigrated to America. His writings on the proper training of orthopaedic surgeons, with their insistence on early specialist education in methods and appliances based on the orthopaedic institute and clinic, are surprisingly modern.

DAVID LE VAY

Semmelweis: his Life and Work, by G. GORTVAY and I. ZOLTAN (Eng. trans. by Eva Rona and R. Bonnerjea), Budapest, Akadémiai Kaidó, 1968, pp. 288, illus., no price stated.

This book is a translation of the Hungarian edition 'Semmelweis elete es munkassaga' which was originally brought out by the same publishers in 1966.

It is an interesting account of the life of Semmelweis with particular emphasis on the Hungarian aspects of his life story. The discovery of the mode of transmission of puerperal fever is well presented and there is a detailed account of his last illness. Several of the later chapters of the book are devoted to a discussion of the initial resistance to his doctrine and the subsequent dispute over the priority for his discovery. The arguments made in relation to these points are often diffuse and unconvincing but it remains a valuable document for the student of Semmelweis as it is well illustrated and well annotated. A major drawback is the lack of an index and cross reference is therefore a difficult problem.

This volume was presented to foreign delegates attending a Conference in 1968 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Semmelweis. The book is not available outside Hungary, but it can be obtained from the Bookshop for Foreign Trade, Kultura, Budapest I.Fö U.32.

NEIL MCINTYRE

Extinct Medical Schools of Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia, by HAROLD J. ABRAHAMS, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press; London, Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. 580, £4.80.

This is a large, encyclopaedic book which could have been smaller, and better, if it had been arranged on rather different lines. As it is, the narrative flow is disturbed continually by lists of graduates and names of teachers, all of which really ought to be in small type in an appendix. But we must accept the book on its own terms and be grateful for the facts unearthed by Dr. Abrahams.

He tells, in somewhat disjointed prose, of eight short-lived medical schools in Philadelphia between 1840 and 1880. This was competition run riot. In fact it typified some of the most potent forces active in nineteenth-century American society, such as a faith in laissez-faire principles and an urge to innovate, and it thus constitutes a most important area for study as much by historians of human behaviour as by the chronicler of medical events. Eventually, of course, America woke up to the danger and clamped down on these medical degree factories. It is interesting to read of the vital part played by the Press in exposing the greatest scandal of all, i.e. the Eclectic Medical College/American University of Philadelphia, where forgery was practised