

Book Reviews

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JOHN A. ROSS, *A medical student in Paris in 1832: an eyewitness account of the year of the cholera pandemic*, Stamford, Lincs., Scientific Era Publications, 1981, 4to, pp. iv, 114, illus., £5.25 + 75p postage.

In late 1831, a young English medical student who had previously studied in Cambridge and Edinburgh arrived in Paris to further his education. During his stay of about seven months, this student – J. R. W. Vose – kept a notebook in which he recorded notes from lectures (including those of Cruveilhier and Andral) and clinical cases and autopsy findings from his hospital instruction, especially on Théophile Mayer's ward at La Charité. Vose's stay coincided with the cholera epidemic of 1832, and he devoted considerable attention to the symptoms, pathology, and therapy of cholera. The notebook is preserved in Liverpool, where Vose subsequently became a successful physician. It has been transcribed by Dr Ross, who also provides an introductory sketch of early nineteenth-century French medicine, details of Vose's career, and explanatory notes and references. The volume is profusely illustrated with portraits, maps, graphs, old medical and topographical engravings, and contemporary photographs. It is decently printed and reasonably priced.

Although the notebook itself contains no monumental insights, it is of interest for several reasons. It shows the young Vose learning the art of physical diagnosis, especially the percussion and auscultation so central to French "hospital medicine". The case histories reflect the continuing concern with therapeutics, despite the relative therapeutic pessimism that can also be discerned. The breadth of Vose's interests is also evident: pathology, medicine, pharmacy, obstetrics, gynaecology, and surgery all come within his ken. Finally, his notebook bears vivid testimony to the appalling mortality among young adults in the Paris where he studied: "A woman of unhealthy appearance, about 34 years of age"; "A female about 35 years of age was admitted . . ."; "A man about 36 years of age and said to have been of intemperate habits died at La Charité . . .". These and similar unfortunates frequent Vose's notebook, sombre reminders not just of the world we have lost, but of the years we have won.

We might wish that Vose's record of his months in Paris had been more reflective, but even as a simple narrative of facts learned, lectures attended, and patients examined, it is worth publishing. Dr Ross's editorial apparatus is full and, while there are a fair number of misprints and factual slips (e.g. Thomas Hodgkin once appears as Hodgkinson, Brunonianism comes out as "Bruonism", and Humphry Davy inevitably appears as "Humphrey"), they do not seriously mar the value of this pleasant little volume.

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An explanation of the fashion and use of three and fifty instruments of chirurgery, gathered out of Ambrosius Pareus, the famous French chirurgion, and done into English, for the behoofe of young practitioners in chirurgery, by H[elkiah] C[rooke], London, printed [by Thomas Cotes] for Michael Sparke, 1634. A facsimile, Edinburgh, West Port Books, 1982, 8vo, pp. ii, 118, woodcuts, £6.50.

The unnamed editor(s) of this reduced-size facsimile reprint have left it for the reviewer to supply an important piece of information not in the introduction. The first (and more complete) edition of this work, printed in 1631, has already been reproduced, as number 141 in the well-known series *The English Experience*, Amsterdam and New York, Da Capo Press, 1969. What is in the introduction does nothing to redeem the book's superfluous nature, as it owes a total and unacknowledged debt to Janet Doe's *Ambroise Paré: A bibliography*, and to the *Dictionary of national biography*, whose errors, for example, in placing the publication of Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia* in 1616 instead of 1615, are here faithfully reproduced. In the