

### Book Reviews

sons and five daughters—five of whom survived. The youngest girl married a Dozent of Heidelberg, whilst the eldest married Johann Conrad Peyer—who described the ‘patches’ named after him.

Wepfer was a popular man who was consulted from far and wide in Switzerland and Germany—as a map on page 37 shows. The medico-literary memoirs of the Wepfer family were bought by the Medical Faculty of Leyden in 1774 for one hundred and twenty gold ducats—six hundred guilders. The writings show Wepfer’s interest in gastro-enterology of which he was an early pioneer. He was also concerned with toxicology, describing a case of ergotism in 1693, and with diseases of the chest.

The book is enlivened by pleasing illustrations and a useful bibliography. It can be recommended to those interested in the early Swiss contributions to medicine.

No. 28 in this series is a large paperback of ninety-nine pages and deals with the history of haemophilia from the Babylonian Talmud until 1965.

After defining haemophilia the author gives an account of the geographical areas where the disorder has been described. In Switzerland it was first mentioned by Felix Platter in 1559. Problems of hereditary transmission are then considered with special reference to the Swiss family trees of von Tenna and von Wald, this latter having been traced back to about 1550. The various theories on the cause of the disorder are then discussed together with a more general account of the major discoveries in the physiology of the blood, naturally with specific reference to Swiss workers—Sahli, Fonio, Feissly, Lenggenhager and Koller. The final chapter concerns itself with questions on clinical matters and prophylaxis.

This is a rather specialized monograph which will probably be of most interest to German-speaking haematologists.

I. M. LIBRACH

*Edward Stevens, Gastric Physiologist, Physician and American Statesman*, ed. by STACEY B. DAY, Cincinnati and Montreal, Cultural and Educational Productions, 1969, pp. 179, illus., £5.00.

In 1962 Dr. Day and the classicist, Dr. R. A. Swanson, translated the first twelve chapters of Stevens’ Edinburgh dissertation *De Alimentorium Concoctione* (1777) (i.e. the portion not translated by Beddoes in his edition of Spallanzani’s *Dissertationes*, 1784). (See *Surgery*, 1962, 52, 819–36). Since then the editor has partially uncovered new sources of information concerning Stevens’ life and youthful connexions with the American politician Alexander Hamilton. Stevens’ Réaumur-inspired, but brilliant, digestion essay is here translated completely; also printed for the first time are a group of letters concerning a dispute between Benjamin Rush and Stevens over the Philadelphia epidemic of yellow fever in 1793. Half the book, however, is occupied by some not particularly exciting correspondence connected with Stevens’ unsuccessful career as Consul-General to Santo-Domingo, 1799–1800.

Both editor and publisher are guilty of extremely slipshod production. Second-rate random notes stand for a commentary to the thesis; italic and roman type is used quite unsystematically; and footnotes are inconsistently and bewilderingly keyed or unkeyed to the texts, or are even, astonishingly, duplicated. Indeed, a reviewer is bound to suspect that Dr. Day’s rough library notes have been printed. The editor, a practising surgeon, has tried to forestall criticism by excusing himself from lack of

## Book Reviews

time—a dangerous argument when he couples it with an attack on (unnamed) pseudo-scholars of the present day. Faced by the editor's romantic studio portrait (p. 179) his own petard is practically hoist!

Yet, from this scrappy production Stevens is rescued from his undeserved obscurity, though not yet to the extent of becoming 'an important figure in early American history', as Day speculates. The new evidence confirms that Stevens was born about 1755 on the Danish West Indian island of St. Croix (now a Virgin island). He first graduated from King's College (Columbia University) in 1774 before reading medicine at Edinburgh and returning to St. Croix as a doctor. In 1794 he became Professor of Medical Practice at Philadelphia, where it is possible that he helped to inspire Young's thesis on digestion in 1803. (Curiously, Stevens' son crossed the path of William Prout in 1830–1—see *Medical Gazette*, vols. 6–9 and Royal Society archives). He retired to St. Croix before 1809 and died there in 1834.

This study can only be considered as a source book for history. Whatever it lacks as a work of scholarship, it at least whets the appetite to know more of the international connexions between schools of research in digestion from Reamur to Tiedemann.

W. H. BROCK

### CONTRIBUTORS

- ACKERKNECHT, Professor ERWIN H., M.D., Medizinhistorisches Institut der Universität Zürich, 8006 Zürich, Switzerland.
- AMULREE, Rt. Hon. Lord, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P., 18 Egerton Terrace, London, S.W.3.
- BROCK, W. H., M.A., Ph.D., Department of the History of Science, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester.
- BYLEBYL, JEROME J., Ph.D., c/o Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London, N.W.1.
- DAVIS, AUDREY B., Ph.D., Curator, Division of Medical Sciences, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. 20560, U.S.A.
- DOUTHWAITE, A. H., M.D., F.R.C.P., Lister House, 11 Wimpole Street, London, W.1.
- GASKELL, E., B.A., A.L.A., Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London, N.W.1.
- JAMES, T. G. ILLTYD, B.Sc., M.Ch., F.R.C.S., 1 Freeland Road, London, W.5.
- JOHNSTON, J. A., M.A., Ph.D., 1 Athelstan Road, Worcester.
- LIBRACH, I. M., M.B., B.Ch., D.P.H., Chadwell Heath Hospital, Grove Road, Chadwell Heath, Essex.
- MCCONAGHEY, R. M. S., O.B.E., M.D., 35 Victoria Road, Dartmouth.
- MATTHEWS, L. G., F.P.S., F.S.A., 2 Pump Court, Temple, London, E.C.4.
- MØLLER-CHRISTENSEN, Dr.med., Dr.med.h.c. Vilh., The Medical-Historical Museum, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- PAGEL, WALTER, M.D., F.C.Path., 57 Millway, London, N.W.7.
- TAYLOR, D. W., M.D., Associate Professor of Physiology, Medical School, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.
- WEISS, DANIEL LEIGH, M.D., Department of Pathology, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, U.S.A.
- WOODINGS, Mrs. ANN F., M.A., 1 Teignmouth Lodge, Teignmouth Road, London, N.W.2.