

Book Reviews

P. W. J. BARTRIP, *Mirror of medicine: a history of the BMJ*, London, British Medical Journal and Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990, 8vo, pp. xiv, 338, illus., £35.00.

The literature on the history of medical journalism (and it is best on the period before the founding of the *British Medical Journal* in 1840) consists mostly of bibliographical materials, just establishing the record of publishing, or bare-bones records of who did the editing. At best we have a few biographies of editors, such as Squire Sprigge's life of Thomas Wakley. Altogether the literature is remarkably sparse, and what there is tends to chronology and hagiography, not analysis. It may not be too much to say, then, that Bartrip's account of the *BMJ* is the first full-scale history of a modern medical journal as a medical institution written by a professional historian.

Bartrip was able to find and use institutional archives of the British Medical Association as well as such records of the *BMJ* itself as survive, to which he had full access. It is rare to have such materials (none comparable exist, for example, for the *Journal of the American Medical Association*), and the circulation and financial figures that Bartrip has assembled alone would make this book set a standard. But the first half of the narrative still had to be based largely on what appeared in the journal, not archives.

The major important themes of the book are how the institution developed, survived, and prospered; how strong editors—there were only six of them from 1870 to 1990—won their independence and made a strong journal. The BMA until the 1860s was ready to abolish the journal because of costs, but eventually the vigorous editing of Ernest Hart and then advertising revenue brought great prosperity to both the journal and the British Medical Association of which it was the organ.

In his attempt to show that the *BMJ* was a true mirror of medicine, Bartrip chose to emphasize the themes of reform and politics, that is, the social face of the medical profession. There is, for example, a great deal more about the political economy of medicine and the National Health Service than there is about diagnosis and treatment. While Bartrip suggests how editors in the nineteenth century took strong stands in favour of scientific medicine as well as social reform, he opens up rather than answers the question of how in the twentieth century a journal became influential and important in scientific medicine even as it helped shape the health-care delivery service.

John C. Burnham, Ohio State University

WILLIAM WAUGH, *John Charnley: the man and the hip*, Berlin, Springer, 1990, 8vo, pp. xvi, 268, illus., DM 75.00.

The development of hip-joint replacement surgery ranks high among the surgical advances of the twentieth century. Millions of patients with arthritic hips have benefited from Sir John Charnley's pioneering efforts in research and clinical use of the "total hip joint". This book tells the story of his life which, in essence, connotes the story of the hip-joint replacement operation.

The author William Waugh, an orthopaedic surgeon, historian, and writer, knew Charnley as a personal friend and colleague. Other, coincidental, personal connections appeared as he began his work on this book. For example, Charnley's basic laboratory research skills developed in London while studying with R. J. S. McDowal at King's College. McDowal, the Professor of Physiology, was Waugh's father-in-law. In the end, however, obtaining the materials to write this book meant a thorough analysis of Charnley's publications and exhaustive interviews with family, friends, and medical colleagues. This has resulted in a comprehensive account of Charnley's life and teachings. Charnley comes across as innovative, technically aggressive, and most successful in his approach to hip surgery. The story progresses from his theoretical beginning, to the development of his total-hip replacement operation, and on to the creation of the Centre for Hip Disease at Wrightington Hospital near Manchester.

The other and perhaps greater aspect of his genius revolved around infection control. The hip replacement, a large foreign body, originally created an unacceptable incidence of wound

Book Reviews

infection (seven per cent of the operated cases). Charnley's development of the concept of a clean air environment for the operating theatre revolutionized operative procedure and effected a much lower rate of infection (less than one per cent). Laminar or linear air-flow in the operating room and body exhaust suits for the surgeon significantly decreased the number of bacteria in the operative field. Interestingly, clean-air technology developed from needs in textile and pharmaceutical plants and in the brewery industry. One cannot help but be reminded how Louis Pasteur's experience with the brewery and wine industry prepared him to settle the controversy on spontaneous generation and to develop the science of bacteriology.

Some critical comments should be offered. Although this book is not meant to be a scientific evaluation of Charnley's work, the review of his research publications becomes unnecessarily technical. Secondly, by separating the book into concepts, rather than following strict chronology, Waugh allows the flow of the story to become disjointed. In the main, however, this thoughtful, well-researched book reads well.

Daniel R. Benson, University of California, Davis

FRANZ EHRING, *Hautkrankheiten: 5 Jahrhunderte wissenschaftlicher Illustration/Skin diseases: 5 centuries of scientific illustration*, Stuttgart and New York, Gustav Fischer, 1989, 4to, pp. vii, 288, illus., DM 268.00.

Unpleasant though they may be, skin diseases provide a richly interesting subject of historical study, bearing as they do on social psychology, venereology, pathology, other clinical and laboratory sciences, and a wide range of other subjects, one of which—dermatological illustration—is finely treated in this volume.

The author first discusses the history of dermatological illustration in relation to the history of medical illustration, the development of classification of skin diseases (identified as a vital pre-condition for illustration), varying artistic approaches and techniques, medical presuppositions, and printing technology. He then reviews, with (usually) ample bibliographical details, a selection of the most important illustrated books on dermatology, concentrating on atlases and textbooks with notable illustrations, by such authors as Robert Willan, Ferdinand von Hebra, and P.-L. A. Cazenave. An entire chapter is, with reason, devoted to J.-L. M. Alibert. The treatment of the publications is enlivened by short biographies and portraits of their authors, and quotations defining the purposes of the publication. The locations of copies consulted are given. The final chapter contemplates the history of dermatological illustration in the long perspective, identifies the key issues, and imparts the wisdom of experience to dermatological authors of today.

The book begins to perform for dermatology what Ludwig Choulant's *Geschichte und Bibliographie* (1852) performed for the history of anatomy. The task was eminently worthwhile, for the often unwieldy and incomplete dermatological atlases of the nineteenth century may be more elusive and ill-documented now than anatomical incunables were in Choulant's day. The book is not offered as exhaustive: future editions would do well to consider, like Choulant, the manuscript era, including figures such as Henry of Mondeville (Ketham's *Fasciculus* did not appear *ex nihilo*). At the later end, Edgar R. Strobel's stereoscopic *Dermato-clinic* (Baltimore, 1914) is one of many works deserving appreciation.

Ehring's volume is evidently a labour of love. His critiques of other men's illustrations gain authority from the outstanding quality of his own. The whole text is provided in English and German, in parallel columns, and is marked by extreme meticulousness. No better foundation for future research could be imagined. Time for libraries to dust off their old dermatological atlases, and for researchers to start perusing them.

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