

### Book Reviews

accept 'alternate' as an alternative for 'alternative'. 'X-ray' serves as a verb, an adjective, and a noun in two senses. For one of these 'radiograph' should be used, and 'film' or 'plate' for its repetition.

The line drawings are usefully chosen and placed to assist the text, but the plates are inconveniently grouped. Most of the plates are interesting photographs of historic events and equipment. The few which depict modern radiographs are superfluous, or for the non-medical reader inadequate: faithful copies of some early radiographs would have been more valuable.

Numerous references at the end of each chapter, and some embedded in the text, give a good start to anyone wishing to enquire further. There is an Index of Persons with over 600 entries.

Few radiologists will buy this book with their own money, though many might be glad to be given it. It should be on the shelves of every medical and scientific library with a historical section. We should be grateful to the Mallinckrodt Co. for making possible this tribute to the pioneers of our art.

A. B. PARTRIDGE

*Bibliotheca Osleriana: a Catalogue of Books illustrating the History of Medicine and Science collected, arranged, and annotated by Sir William Osler, Bt. and bequeathed to McGill University, Montreal and London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1969, pp. xli, 792, £29.25.*

This is a reprint of the famous catalogue of Sir William Osler's bequest to McGill University, first published at Oxford by the Clarendon Press in 1929. The original text is reproduced in full with the addition of a prologue by Professor Lloyd G. Stevenson and six pages of addenda and corrigenda.

In his elegant prologue Professor Stevenson is at pains to point out that '*Bibliotheca Osleriana* remains a useful, reliable and delightful guide'. Its reliability from a technical point of view is not in doubt. The work of W. W. Francis and his associates is a model of editorial precision and care. Forty years have revealed a comparatively small number of errors and omissions, many of them trivial. Again, the book will always have interest as an attractive and personal record of Osler's enthusiastic pursuit of medical history and book collecting. It is the question of the *Bibliotheca's* continuing value as a work of reference which raises some doubts as to the wisdom of this very expensive reissue.

In judging the value of the reprint it is important to keep in mind that its arrangement and contents were the result of Osler's dominating interest in great men and important books. Perhaps as an inevitable consequence of his scientific and medical training, he saw the history of medicine as an evolutionary, almost organic, process. From primitive beginnings medicine had been shaped and adapted ever closer to the ideal of biological and clinical truth, by the accumulation of facts and valid observations and the discarding of superstition and error. Each century in great or lesser degree made its contribution through the life and work of men who stood out from their contemporaries by virtue of the shared factor of scientific genius. His point of reference was always the modern state of the art, and there is a sense in which Osler was interested not so much in the history of medicine, as in tracing what he conceived to be the antecedents of modern medical science.

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These interests are not without historical value and are still being indulged today, but with an increasingly old-fashioned air. Attention is turning away from men of genius and their works in virtual isolation to a consideration of their place in contemporary society and of the intellectual forces that influenced them. We are slowly learning that the history of medicine is a part of general history, not a subdivision of clinical or even biological science.

If the purpose and final shape of *Bibliotheca Osleriana* reflect a theory of medical history which is now itself a part of history rather than of its modern practice, so too the contents of some of the main sections are open to criticism. The *bibliotheca prima* (listing what might be called the primary sources) no longer represents the contents of the Osler Library at McGill. Can anyone pretend that some of the other sections, particularly the historical, biographical and bibliographical ones, any longer provide an adequate introduction to the secondary literature of the subject?

One can readily appreciate and sympathize with the sentiments that prompted this reprint. Professor Stevenson provides a delightfully evocative defence of them in his prologue. Where the heart is not engaged, however, use of the head leads one seriously to wonder whether this expensive act of *pietas* was strictly necessary.

E. J. FREEMAN

*Johannes Wildberger (1815–1879) ein Schweizer Messerschmied und Wegbereiter der Orthopädie*, by G. Grosch (Basler Veröffentlichungen zur Geschichte der Medizin und der Biologie, Fasc. XXVII), Basle and Stuttgart, Schwabe, 1969, pp. 55, illus., S.Fr. 12.

Switzerland has not been outstanding in the history of orthopaedics, even though the world's first orthopaedic institute was established in 1780 at Orbe, by Venel. The light now cast on the hitherto rather shadowy figure of Johannes Wildberger in this new monograph, one of the series issuing from the Institute of Medical History at Basle University under the aegis of Professor Buess, is therefore welcome.

Wildberger was a native of Neunkirchen in Kanton Schaffhausen and was apprenticed as a surgical instrument maker. After a period of travel he settled in Bamberg, in Franconia, where he took an increasing interest in the orthopaedic applications of his craft, fostered by a visit to the first German orthopaedic institute, that of Heine at Würzburg. He devised his own splints for the management of spine and hip diseases, acquired a reputation, and was sent many patients by the local doctors. Because he had to travel widely to see his patients and found their supervision inadequate he set up, in 1849, his own institute for in-patients as an extension of the Bamberg City Hospital, this in the face of opposition based on his lack of professional qualifications.

The institute flourished, though it never held more than thirty patients, some from as far afield as Russia and Sicily. There was the usual pedagogic flavour of the period, with religious and musical instruction; but the essential feature was his insistence on complete rest and rigid, uninterrupted splintage, in which his thought resembles that of Hugh Owen Thomas. Wildberger was very conservative, eschewed manipulation, and approached tenotomy and osteotomy with reluctance. He was one of the earliest therapists to use photographs to document the progress of recovery.