

Book Reviews

Die Heilkunde in Aachen von römischer Zeit bis zum Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts, by EGON SCHMITZ-CLIEVER, Aachen, 1963. (Sonderdruck aus der *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichts-vereins*, Band 74/75), pp. 166, illus., DM. 11.

The first part deals with the medical history of Aachen generally, beginning with the Roman thermal baths built from the hot springs sacred to the originally Celtic god Apollo Grannus, through the Middle Ages when certain members of the clergy were exempted from the assumed incompatibility of the medical and their own profession, to the first hospitals and the oaths and position of midwives and barber-surgeons. From the fourteenth century onwards ample documentation is available and produced skilfully and entertainingly.

The second, extremely useful, part provides biographical details of Aachen physicians and surgeons chronologically arranged. It is interesting to note that Aachen remained free from the great plague of 1663–67 and that Josef Hartung's management of the Aachen cholera epidemic of 1832 was more successful than the measures adopted elsewhere in the Prussia of the time.

MARIANNE WINDER

Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis und die Wiener medizinische Schule, by ERNA LESKY, Vienna, H. Böhlau, 1964, pp. 93, illus., OS. 84.00.

Dr. Erna Lesky, Professor of History of Medicine at the University of Vienna, has written an excellent monograph on Semmelweis's discovery of the cause of the puerperal fever and on the fight for its general recognition. She shows that not only personal, but also important political motives had played a great role. Semmelweis's struggle began shortly after the 1848 revolution had been suppressed and the newly-won freedom of the universities was greatly restricted. Semmelweis's protectors, mainly Rokitansky, Skoda and Dumreicher, were fighting not only for his assistantship and for the recognition of his discovery, but also for the freedom of scientific progress against the forces of reactionary conservatism represented by Rosas, Vice-Director of Medical Studies, J. Klein, Semmelweis's chief, and others. Lesky illustrates these matters very vividly by many documents from the Austrian State archives and from the University, which she publishes for the first time. She evaluates critically the various earlier publications on this subject; she especially reproaches F. Schürer von Waldheim, whose biography of Semmelweis, published in 1905 has been used as a source by many later authors, for giving an 'incomplete and hypothetical picture which entangles hypothesis and evidence'.

There are only two points to which I would like to take exception: first, Professor Lesky uses some newly-formed words which are difficult to understand not only by non-German readers, such as: 'ingedrängter, regestenartiger Kürze' (page 8); 'Paragraphierbare Verfügungen' (page 25) or 'vorhergründig'. Secondly, she reprints the text of the old documents with the original, sometimes ancient or faulty spelling of some words and draws the attention of the reader to these faults by putting the word '(sic!)' after each such word.

But I repeat, this book is an invaluable contribution to the history of Semmelweis's struggle and its background.

A. ARNSTEIN