

## Book Reviews

upon manuscript sources, many not previously exploited and some in private hands. Insights abound into not only Simon's career, presented on a decidedly unheroic scale, but also the many lives he touched during these years – including Hideyo Noguchi, William Osler, William Welch, and the author's uncle (and writer of reports on medical education), Abraham Flexner. If some of the description of late-nineteenth-century American medicine is tediously familiar, the intrinsic interest of the sections on Helen's relationships with Bertrand Russell and with her sister Carey (feminist and president of Bryn Mawr College) compensates in full.

The crafting of this work shows the narrative skill that won the author a Pulitzer Prize Citation for his biography of George Washington. For the medical historian, a couple of evenings spent with *An American saga* make a splendid busman's holiday.

John Harley Warner  
Wellcome Institute

BARBARA SICHERMAN, *Alice Hamilton. A life in letters*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. xvi, 460, £20.00.

Alice Hamilton (1869–1970) is best known through her 1943 autobiography, *Exploring the dangerous trades*, as a pioneer in American industrial medicine. This elegantly written and carefully edited volume of Hamilton letters provides more than a new biographical perspective on a medical field. Drawing upon her extensive knowledge and sensitive melding of medical and women's history, Sicherman presents us with a richly textured "life in letters" of one of the twentieth century's more remarkable human beings.

Hamilton came of age as a woman physician in the late nineteenth century, caught in the strictures of Victorian gentility yet entangled in the excitement of social reform and the promise of medical science. The letters, and Sicherman's generous introductions, provide wonderful insight into how Hamilton struggled with these conflicting tensions to redesign industrial medicine and actively participate in critical political and social events.

Medical historians will find particularly interesting the details of her skill in gaining entry into industrial plants, her solutions to a wide variety of occupational health problems, and her ways of handling the outrageous institutional discrimination against her, particularly as the first woman faculty member at Harvard. But the meaning of her life will be diminished if historians read only to learn about this part of her commitments. Her importance as a central figure at Chicago's famous Hull House and in women's international peace work is crucial to understanding Hamilton as an individual and physician-researcher. It is impossible to comprehend either her medical or social reform work alone.

Unlike the autobiography written with insight but self-consciousness at seventy-four, this collection of letters allows us to see Hamilton as she creates herself, personally and publicly, till the very end of her long life. As a "work in two voices", Sicherman allows Hamilton to control the book, but not to overwhelm it. This volume is a fascinating example of how far an edited collection of letters can take us, but also how much more it makes us want to know. A full-scale biography of Hamilton is still very much needed.

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JOHN DUFFY, *The Tulane University Medical Center: one hundred and fifty years of medical education*, Baton Rouge and London, Louisiana State University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. xiv, 253, illus., [no price stated].

From the time he wrote *The Rudolph Matas history of medicine in Louisiana* (1958), John Duffy has been the acknowledged authority on the medical history of New Orleans. Accordingly, when Tulane University wanted to commission a history of its medical centre in