

Book Reviews

Commentaires de la Faculté de Médecine de l'Université de Paris (1516–1560), edited, with an introduction and notes by MARIE-LOUISE CONCASTY, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1964.

The Minutes of the Proceedings from 1395 to 1786 of the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Paris have survived, bound in twenty-four rather disparate volumes. The first six are small folios, the remainder large. The last, covering the period from 1776 to 1786, was the first to be published in 1903. In 1891, however, it had been decided to publish the whole series from the beginning and the first of these appeared in 1915 with an introduction and notes by Dr. Ernest Wickersheimer. This reproduced the text, 'virtually in extenso', of the first three volumes and part of the fourth, covering the period from 1395 to 1516. The second in this series begins where the first left off on the sixtieth page of the fourth volume and extends to the fifty-third of the seventh volume, covering the period 1516 to 1560. This has resulted in a book that is just a little longer, 695 pages instead of 555 and the introduction 106 pages instead of 93, but, despite the lapse of fifty years and the ravages of two major European wars, the paper and the printing, the scholarship and the devotion to detail, remain virtually unchanged. This is a remarkable achievement.

The particular period, that of the French Renaissance; the wealth of additional contemporary information, fully utilized in the notes, lend this book a further attraction. The introduction provides an excellent example of the sort of information these Minutes, written by each successive Dean of the Faculty, are capable of yielding. It resembles and forms a supplement to that of Wickersheimer to which frequent reference is made. It covers a much shorter period, however, and is, therefore, far more detailed. It is enriched by an extensive series of footnotes, many of which refer to other contemporary records such as those found in Coyecque's *Recueil d'actes notariés*. It does, however, not take the place of the contemporary Minutes. Indeed there are occasions when it may be that they admit of an interpretation which differs from that found in the introduction.

In an ordinary work this would not matter so much: but this is one in which a certain pedantry is perhaps not altogether out of place. In order to illustrate this point, which some may perhaps feel is unimportant, we have placed side by side a reference taken from the Minutes and the note from the introduction which refers to this incident. It is apparent that the note is the lengthier of the two and that it contains certain statements of fact such as that Francis the first had created two chairs in medicine, one being occupied by Sylvius and the other by Vidus Vidius, that are lacking in original reference. But so far as is known, neither Vidus Vidius nor Sylvius were styled Royal Professors. The former was addressed by the Pope as *Philosophus Florentinus Regis Christianissimi Physicus*, and by the King as *Nostre Medecin Ordinaire et Lecteur en Paris*, while the latter, many years later, was attached in 1550 to the College with the title of *Medicae rei apud Parisios interpres Regius*. Louis de Bourges, in the Latin version, correctly then refers to Vidus Vidius, simply, as one of the King's physicians.

There is in the note, moreover, the charming suggestion that the King was himself, with his chief Physician as his intermediary, soliciting the Faculty for their authorization for the lectures. There are, however, many reasons for thinking it unlikely that

Francis I should at that time have gone to such lengths to calm the susceptibilities of the Regents of Faculty or have surrounded his nomination of Vidus Vidius to his own college with marks of deference to theirs.

2 augusti ^(a), in eodem loco, super provisione cujusdam capelanie permutacionem, in qua congregacione lecte sunt nonnulla lictere a domino Ludovico (fol. 178 r^o) Burgensis, primo regis medico, transmissa, quibus significabatur Facultati ut permitteret magistrum Guydonem Wido ^(a), medicum regium, Parisius legere librum quemdam, videlicet Ypocratem *De vulneribus capitis*^(a), ab illo versum et traductum, quibus lectis Facultas, oculis et auribus pertusis, absque ulteriori [*sic*] congregacione mandato regio parere voluit.

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^(a) C'est pourtant à un étranger, le Florentin Guido Guidi (*Vidus Vidius*), que François I^{er} avait confié l'une des deux chaires de médecine, créées pour élargir les cadres du Collège royal, l'autre étant occupée par Jacques Du Bois, dit *Sylvius*. Pour calmer les susceptibilités des régents qui pouvaient prendre ombrage de cette concurrence, d'autant plus que le lecteur, désigné en 1542, n'était pas des leurs, le roi entoura cette nomination de marques de déférence. Par l'intermédiaire du régent Louis Burgensis, son premier médecin, il sollicita de la Faculté l'autorisation pour Guidi de commenter le *De vulneribus capitis* d'Hippocrate, dans la traduction établie par le Florentin (voir p. 347^a). Il eût été malséant de ne pas déférer au désir de François I^{er} et de faire mauvais visage au protégé du souverain. Mais les maîtres de la rue de la Bûcherie durent éprouver quelque amertume. Le mécontentement, s'il y en eut, ne dura pas longtemps puisque les successeurs de Guidi furent le plus souvent choisis parmi les régents (André Beauvais, Jacques Goupil).

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We are not told what was in the message other than that it notified or possibly warned the Faculty that Guido Guidi, one of the Royal Physicians, was to lecture in Paris on the Hippocratic text on head injuries, which he had edited and translated, and that they were to permit this. The Dean, however, in a few remarkably vivid words summed up their response to this message, which it would seem, had been drummed or hammered into them so that their eyes and ears had been 'transfixed'. This could hardly have been the soothing message that is implied in the footnote. The Faculty themselves considered this as an order and decided that it should be obeyed without calling a further meeting.

In another work such little differences and such minor inaccuracies would not matter so much but the introduction is so delightfully written in a modern tongue, and so readily accessible, that one feels there is a danger that the text itself with its own excellent footnotes may suffer from comparative neglect.

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