

Book Reviews

and with the new social order associated with industrialization and urban life. He understands these attitudes to be derivative of humanitarian sentiments displaced upon animals, the distinction between man and beast having been eroded by physiological and taxonomic studies in the eighteenth century. While his interpretation appears reasonable and persuasive, it is really not adequate to explain the very different responses to vivisection met with in England and in France. Turner's analysis, although provocative, thus remains incomplete; it focuses entirely on Anglo-American perceptions of animal cruelty. It, nonetheless, provides a good account of the social origins, activities, and political impact of the societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals which were active in Britain and the United States during the nineteenth century.

Readers of this journal will be especially interested in Turner's analysis of the changed strategy and rhetoric of the movement in the latter part of the nineteenth century. At this time, medical scientists challenged the claimed moral superiority of animal protectors, defending physiological experiments on animals on the basis of their own concern for human suffering. After passage of the controversial Vivisection Act of 1876, animal protectors gradually redefined their goals and redirected their energies away from scientific abuse of animals towards provision of animal shelters and public education on behalf of household pets.

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KAREL B. ABSOLON, *The surgeon's surgeon. Theodor Billroth 1829–1894*, vol. 1, Lawrence, Kansas, Coronado Press, 1979, 8vo, pp. xiv, 282, illus., \$15.00.

Theodor Billroth (1829–1894) made great contributions to the emergence of modern surgery in the second half of the nineteenth century. Moreover, he was a naturalist, biologist, teacher, writer, and musician of great stamina. Not surprisingly, therefore, a detailed study of his life has hitherto remained a desideratum.

In the first of a planned three-volume biography, Professor Absolon deals with Billroth's youth and his development until, as professor of surgery at Zurich (1859–1867), he was appointed to a chair in Vienna. The author attempts to trace simultaneously the evolution of all facets of Billroth's activities within the framework of German and European culture. He proceeds chronologically, basing his text mostly on the letters of Billroth (previously edited in German only) and on part of his published writings. This format does not always make for easy reading, particularly since main themes do not appear to be sufficiently emphasized. Important medical topics such as Billroth's stances in favour of more historical rather than pathological research (pp. 61, 166), his views on the value of theory and surgical technique when isolated from practice, active experimentation and historical evidence (p. 181), and his ideas on statistics, on teaching, on writing papers and publishing "summaries" (p. 141) are treated on a par with an array of lesser details. (For example, all of Billroth's teachers are listed (p. 72). One of his high-school teachers is even introduced by one of the rare footnotes (p. 11), whereas throughout the book nothing is said of many more pertinent personalities.) Such particulars become the more disturbing when they are not accurately given (see, e.g., the section on Swiss geography and politics, pp. 178, 278).

It may, however, be unfair to dwell on these shortcomings before the final two volumes appear. It is hoped that they will overcome such difficulties of perspective and form. The announced bibliography should make up for the lack of consistent referencing of quotations and statements (which would help further research). The frequent misspelling of foreign names (e.g. Rudolphium, Kantonspital, Viussen, R. v. Krönlein, Dummreicher, Le Gran, Volpeau) might be avoided.

The book's flaws are, however, minor when compared with its merit in drawing the attention of both the surgeon and the historian to a most captivating character of a period of medical and cultural history which is only beginning to be explored.

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