

## Book Reviews

. . . to illustrate the *Morbid Anatomy . . . of the Human Body*', London, 1798–1803, from the Medical Library of the University of Melbourne. It had formerly belonged to William Clift (1775–1849) amanuensis to John Hunter and first Conservator of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. This volume contains 48 of Clift's original drawings which he had prepared for Baillie, most skilfully drawn in ink and brown wash with some colour. Another 24 of the original drawings are preserved in the Royal College of Physicians, London. The University of Melbourne purchased the book in London about 1870 but its earlier history is not known.

A brief sketch of Clift's life and work was given.

The second paper was presented by Dr. Bryan Gandevia, Curator of the Museum of the Medical Society of Victoria, who gave an account of the progress of the Museum in the last few years. A grant from the British Medical Insurance Company had made it possible for a part-time assistant to be employed in the Museum. With her help considerable progress has been made in the work of classifying the historical articles by Australian authors and articles dealing with Australian medical history. In addition, a considerable number of documents, manuscripts, letters and photographs had been filed and indexed. Part of the policy of the B.M.A. Library was that all books by Australians or of Australian medical interest published before 1900 were transferred to the Museum. All books in the Library dealing with medical Australiana, as well as other books of historical value were kept under review with the object of transferring them to the Museum when their period of active usefulness in the Library had ended.

The third paper, by Dr. Frank Forster, dealt with the life of Dr. Samuel Merriman (1771–1852) one of the busiest of the London obstetricians in the late eighteenth century who, in his lifetime, performed over 10,000 deliveries. Dr. Forster showed three interleaved volumes of Smellie's textbook of midwifery, which had contained the bookplates of Merriman's nephew, also named Samuel Merriman, who had himself been a well-known *acoucheur* at the Middlesex Hospital. It had been realized that these bookplates covered other bookplates belonging to some previous owner so they were removed. It was then found that the earlier owner had been the elder Merriman. The interleaved pages contained one hundred of the elder Merriman's case histories. Merriman's descendants are still living at Reading and there is an unpublished memoir of the life of the elder Merriman in the possession of the family.

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*A History of Embryology*. JOSEPH NEEDHAM, F.R.S. 2nd edition. Revised with the assistance of Arthur Hughes. London: Cambridge University Press, 1959; pp. 304. Illustrated. 5s. 6d.

In the early nineteen-thirties Dr. Joseph Needham gave a series of lectures at the University of London entitled 'Speculation, Observation and Experiment as illustrated by the History of Embryology', and, in amplified form, these were published in 1934 as *A History of Embryology*. This has been out of print for a number of years and now a second edition has been published, in the revision of which the author has been assisted by Dr. Arthur Hughes, Lecturer in Anatomy in the University of Cambridge.

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The present volume also includes a concluding chapter by Dr. Needham which summarizes the influences which have operated in the history of embryology from the speculations of the ancients to the birth of the science of experimental embryology as we know it today. Although the present book is entitled *A History of Embryology* it only brings the story to about 1800. The continuation to the end of the nineteenth century is hinted at as a project for the future.

To have produced a second edition of this well-known book is of course a great service to the history of medicine and biology in general but most readers will regret the rather abrupt ending. It is painfully reminiscent of the familiar phrase 'to be continued in our next', which punctuated the monthly instalments of the riddles of Sherlock Holmes. In what has already been printed we are told a great deal about the speculations of the ancients and of the restricted observations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the story breaks off just as we approach the age of experiment. We are left waiting for the continuation of the exciting story of the consequences of 'seeing what would happen if . . .' and all that developed from this attitude in the nineteenth century.

CUTHBERT DUKES

*Medical Museum Technology*. J. J. and M. J. EDWARDS. London: Oxford University Press, 1959; pp. 182. Illustrated. 21s.

A medical museum is often regarded as rather a dull place in which bottled specimens are kept to be brought out occasionally into the light of day for lectures or examination purposes. But there is no reason why it should be a dull place if modern techniques are used for the mounting and display of what Arthur Keith once described as 'Nature's own original documents'. In a similar way books about museum technology might be expected to be sombre literature dealing mainly with the preservation and mounting of medical curiosities and monstrosities. But here again there is no reason why this should be so and in this book by J. J. and M. J. Edwards we have practical proof that this seemingly unattractive subject may be made of absorbing interest.

The reason why the authors have succeeded in producing a readable book on a technical subject is because of the historical approach they have adopted. The book is divided into three parts dealing successively with museum technique up to the mid-nineteenth century, the discovery of formalin preservation and modern museum techniques. It is a fine example of the way in which 'dry bones' may be restored to life by a spice of history.

CUTHBERT DUKES

*Ancient Egyptian and Cnidian Medicine*. ROBERT O. STEUER and J. B. de C. M. SAUNDERS. London: Cambridge University Press, 1959; pp. 90. 22s. 6d.

*Ancient Egyptian and Cnidian Medicine* sets out to trace the influence of ancient Egyptian medicine on the medical practice of Cnidus, a Greek colony on the coast of Asia Minor: with reference, in particular, to etiological conceptions of disease. One important school of ancient Egyptian medicine held that *WHDW*, an etiological principle involved in putrefaction, was a basic cause of disease. This theory seems to have originated in Egyptian religious notions and to have been supported by observation of the process of mummification, for whilst the embalmer's duty was to prevent putrefaction in the dead body the task of the physician appeared to be that of preventing it in the living body!