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The concept of Mark Silverman, visiting academic at the Wellcome Institute, this work consists of short essays by 30 authors under the editorship of five prominent members of the British Cardiac Society. It gives an account of the research carried out by British workers in the principal fields of cardiology in the last century. The preface by Peter Fleming contains an interesting description of clinical practice in the first half of the period – up to the Second World War. The editors have wisely widened the scope of the study to include essays on the post-war development of cardiology in the era of the National Health Service (NHS). The training and distribution of specialists are discussed, as are the growth of societies and journals, the origin of the British Heart Foundation and the specialist London hospitals – the National Heart, Brompton and Hammersmith.

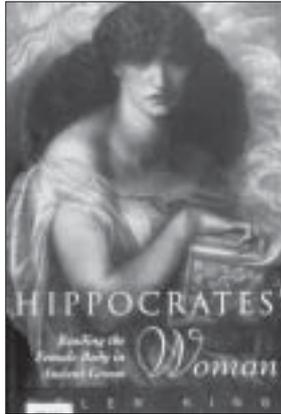
The general topics covered in some detail are clinical investigative methods, preventative measures, surgery, pacing, rehabilitation and drug trials, while briefer accounts follow on specific diseases. The book ends with biographical notes on six leading British cardiologists, Brock, Lewis, Mackenzie, McMichael, Parkinson and Wood, each accompanied by a photograph. Chapters are fully and usefully referenced and sparsely illustrated. The overall picture is of a very respectable contribution by British workers handicapped by restricted funding, shortages of buildings, equipment and trained personnel, and a growing clinical load. A repeated theme is the importance of the transatlantic link in furthering technological advances and training, and shared experience through personal contacts.

The editors rightly disclaim comprehensive coverage of the whole field of cardiology. No attempt is made to cater for the non-cardiological reader; medical and technical terms are not explained and there is little

discussion or argument over controversial points. Essentially it is a factual account of work done, prompted by a laudable wish to keep a record for history and also perhaps by a feeling of piety towards respected teachers. While justly recording the numerous and important contributions of British investigators, the book takes a not uncritical view of the development of the speciality and points to the lessons for the future. Britain still lags behind the rest of the developed world in reducing mortality from coronary disease, perhaps through tardy and somewhat reluctant acceptance of primary preventative measures. The early dominance of haemodynamics to the neglect of biochemical research may have contributed to this. An interesting chapter by Julian and Pocock is devoted to the many major clinical trials organised in the UK. The importance of design and statistical power is illustrated by apparently conflicting results leading to misleading conclusions.

Retired cardiologists will enjoy recalling the controversies of the past; backward or forward failure, the myocardial factor in valve disease, diet and coronary artery disease, is thrombus in coronaries a primary or secondary phenomenon?, two blood pressure peaks or one, and so on. Topics which are less fully covered are cardiovascular physiology, pulmonary heart disease, cardiac drugs and epidemiology. Some chapters are strictly factual; a few are engagingly anecdotal. Among the most readable are those by Leatham on bedside diagnosis and by Treasure on cardiac surgery. The whole presents a picture of astonishing change mid-century when specialist cardiology took off with the discovery of new investigative techniques and under the stimulus of newly possible surgical access to the heart.

A.H. KITCHIN



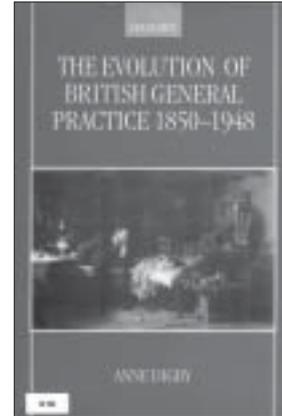
Routledge
ISBN 0415138957

It may be conjectured that *Hippocrates' Woman* can have little to tell us of relevance to health care in the 21st century. On the contrary, this reflection on the origins and history of gynaecology is a telling commentary on the extent to which social and cultural context can distort even medical science. Distort, in the sense of constraining what is seen, what is recorded, and the meaning later given to those records; and of failing to resist the introduction of new procedures for which these records are inappropriately and fallaciously cited as authority. Such a scenario is not confined to considerations of disorder or disease in the reproductive organs of women in ancient times. The potential persists in contemporary health care, wherever there is inequality in the clinician/patient relationship – as may be the case with immigrants, the elderly and the socio-economically disadvantaged.

This book is packed with rich and fascinating detail, skilful review and analysis. Some of the most interesting insights depend on accepting the author's judgement on conflicting translations of specific passages. This is made easy by the strong impression gained that King is a translator of considerable skill and subtlety. Many revelations are outrageous, but the author maintains scholarly calm, occasionally deploying a dry humour to good effect. There is an overriding impression that Hippocratic gynaecology has been honoured as much 'in the breach as in the observance'.

The text is interspersed with myriad citations of ancient and more recent documents, and in addition each chapter is extensively annotated. It must be acknowledged therefore that this is not an easy book to read. However, the largely independent chapters facilitate dipping, and persistence is amply rewarded. If you have any interest in the history of healing, patient/doctor relationships in Western culture, inequalities in health, the risks inherent in translating or citing texts from a different age and socio-cultural setting, or women's health, this book should be on your 'to read' list.

P. WARNER



Oxford University Press
ISBN 0198205139

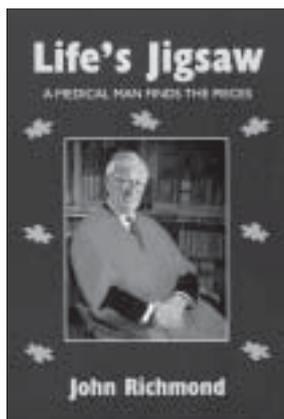
This important book must have a place in every medical library. Digby has devised an ingenious method to study general practice from its first emergence in recognisable modern form until its absorption into the NHS.

At the core of the book is a database created essentially from the obituaries of almost 1,000 GPs, from the Medical Directory, from practice records and from the oral testimony of retired GPs and their families, and supplemented by material from archives and a wide range of secondary sources. This accumulation of information is then analysed, using a mixture of Lamarkian and Darwinian evolutionary theory. General practitioners are regarded as carriers of memes, or genes (particular medical practices), which are subject to mutations (innovations). The mutations may be endogenous when they are induced by experience within the profession or exogenous when provoked by such events as the introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme.

This is an elegant exercise in quantitative analysis. Since it is neither a narrative history nor a history of ideas, it is understandable that it has no room for the Highlands and Islands Medical Service, from 1913 Britain's first comprehensive and free general practice. Professor Digby has attempted, with partial success, to embrace all general practice within the 'triangular relationship' of England, Wales and Scotland in a single analysis. To make this more feasible she advances the doubtful proposition that doctors in Scotland were less nationalistic than the generality of the population. She also fails to remind the reader that, as was made clear in the House of Commons on 10 December 1946, the NHS in Scotland, with its distinctive GP service, was based on the Cathcart Report – a report that strangely goes unnoticed.

The book achieves its purpose and in the context the deficiencies are trivial. It will undoubtedly become recognised as an invaluable source of information on the first one hundred years of general practice.

M. MCCRAE



The Memoir Club
ISBN 1841040258

An ancient sage is reputed to have enunciated to those hanging on his pearls of wisdom that to know of the lives and activities of those who have trodden the same path previously is not only a worthwhile, but an essential, experience. Knowledge of those who have excelled and achieved great things in their careers is a salutary and compelling stimulus to those of succeeding generations who should aim to scale the same heights of success. Perhaps, a witness to this is that in every ancient culture, the exploits of the elders are celebrated, and their successes talked about and emulated, in their own lifetime and later; indeed, such achievements are celebrated in song and in writing.

It is therefore very pleasing that John Richmond, who has accumulated so much honour and achievement in his professional lifetime, has been persuaded to set down in writing some of his memoirs. Some of the strong themes that have played as the accompaniment to the various movements of his career are a sense of fair play and probity, the edifying, not-to-be-forgotten influence of good teachers, a gentleman's approach to all those with whom he comes into contact, a desire to ensure that the next generations of doctors are soundly educated, a commitment to act kindly and compassionately to all

patients, and a deep sense of history; above all, the love of his family, immediate and remote, is the leitmotif that recurs throughout this grand and happy symphony that has been John's life both before and after his retirement.

Another aspect of any memoirs is the ability to obtain from them a closer first-hand insight into the politics, and the manner of thinking of previous eras and their contemporary grandees; the narrative of the well-travelled Professor Richmond is very informative in this way. By the bye, a physician, a past President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh no less, and one who had been trained to defend Dalkeith against the invader, who has developed an expertise in snookering on the beige table, and one who could reduce a dislocated shoulder by the Kocher's manoeuvre, is no mean physician!

Happiness and a true *joie de vivre* pervade this short text, embellished, as it is, by several anecdotes, many light-hearted, with a copious, and simply wonderful, collection of illustrations. It does not take a wise man to tell aspiring young physicians that this text is a must for their library shelves.

A. BUSUTTIL