Reviews and Book Notes


Professor Arturo Castiglioni, one of the outstanding medical historians of our time, passed his seventieth birthday on April 10, 1944. Thanks to the energy of Dr. Henry E. Sigerist, Professor of the History of Medicine and Director of the Johns Hopkins Institute of the History of Medicine, a large volume of papers by Dr. Castiglioni's friends has been issued, edited by Dr. Sigerist and his associate, Miss Genevieve Miller, as a supplement to the Bulletin of the History of Medicine. The papers, covering a wide variety of subjects, are mostly in English, although five other languages are used. Preceding the paper is a dedicatory letter from Dr. Sigerist to Professor Castiglioni written in a charming, intimate style and serving as a pleasant introduction to the volume. From this letter, moreover, there emerges a word portrait of the man, skillfully delineated, enabling those who do not know him to realize what Professor Castiglioni is like and how superbly he has overcome the tragedy of his exclusion from his native land, five years ago, to settle in New Haven, Connecticut, as research associate and lecturer in the history of medicine at Yale University. This change of country, as well as the change of language, was not easy for a man already well along in years and firmly established as a sound, respected practitioner of medicine by vocation and historian by avocation. Great credit is due to Castiglioni for making his journey to America so successfully and in never losing on the way his impetus to carry on the work he had already started in spite of the almost overwhelming odds against him.

To review each paper in this important collection would be beyond the scope of a book review. One can pick out, however, a few of them to indicate the high level of the whole volume and the multiplicity of subjects covered by it. Fortunately, there is at the end of the volume an excellent index of names so that one can quickly find the reference to any particular writer.

In alphabetical order, attention is briefly called to the following papers without in any way detracting from the value, as visualized by the reviewer, of the other papers in the volume. First is a biographical note on Paul Bert, the first assistant for many years of Claude Bernard and recently recognized for his book on aviation medicine, translated from the French under the
title, *Barometric Pressure*, and published in this country in 1943. The book is of outstanding importance in the history of medicine and we are indebted to Dr. Edwin H. Ackerknecht of the Johns Hopkins Institute of the History of Medicine for his essay on Bert and his background.

Alberto Ascoli, formerly Professor of Pathology and Director of the Vaccine Institute, University of Milan, and now in this country, writes an interesting paper on the difficulty of assigning, in an impartial manner, discoverers’ names to microorganisms, using various illustrations, including that of Gram. Ascoli finds there are many debatable points in the field of microbiology and thinks that the subject might well come up for discussion on the program of the general meetings of the Society of American Bacteriologists and the American Association of Immunologists.

Calabresi, formerly of Milan, writes on Lancisi and the problem of the great number of sudden deaths in Rome in 1705, probably due to cardiovascular disease. Foa, also formerly of Milan, describes the medico-legal museum, particularly devoted to psychiatry and anthropology, made by Cesare Lombroso.

J. F. Fulton discusses Polydore Vergil, a scholar of the Italian Renaissance, who settled in England and became the first historian of medicine after the advent of printing and Iago Galdston writes on J. A. F. Ozanam, a French physician, noted for his delineation of the epidemic constitution. Likewise, C. F. Mayer describes a little known epidemiological monograph by J. M. Mignotus, 1535. Raymond de Saussure, on Bérard, George Sarton, on Becaria, Curt Proskauer, on Hans Sachs, and Edelstein on Sydenham and Cervantes, give an idea of the breadth of the subjects covered in this volume. One must list, moreover, some general topics also skillfully handled, such as *angina inflamatoria*, by Krumbhaar and McDaniel, cardiology, by Luisada, diabetes by Magnus-Levy, early American hospitals, by C. M. Durán, American marine medicine chests, by Genevieve Miller, British and German medicine, by Max Neuburger, Marco Polo’s *Description of the World*, by L. Olschki, retail pharmacy, by G. Urdang and others.

The volume is well organized, the papers are of excellent worth and rare would be the doctor who could not find much pleasure and instruction in reading this worthy Festschrift.

Henry R. Viets, M.D.


The authoress, Rachel Baker, has succeeded in presenting a brief and attractive biography of Elizabeth Blackwell, M.D., the woman who first dared to study medicine.

The destruction by fire of the Blackwell sugar refinery in Bristol resulted in the removal of the family to America. A question by a friend, seriously ill with malignancy, “Why don’t you undertake the study of medicine,” intrigued Elizabeth Blackwell, even though it also repelled her for she hated everything connected with the body and could not bear the sight of a medical book. However she could not dismiss from her mind the possibility