

Book Reviews

hospital from the West End in his motor car with another following behind in case of a breakdown; and of another chief, whom he accompanied on the occasion when the vehicle was stopped in order that the policeman on duty at the Mansion House might receive his half-crown Christmas box.

Throughout this volume, as with the one which preceded it, the author has made full use of published reminiscences, and by adding others, such as those of Sir Hugh, he has produced a colourful and human story. History is in essence the story of people and the impact they have made on their fellow men and on their environment. Medical history is no exception, and by abiding by this tenet one can with confidence hail this history of the London Hospital as a classic of medical literature.

W. H. MCMENEMEY

A History of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, 1654–1963, by J. D. H. WIDDLESS, Edinburgh and London, E. & S. Livingstone, 1963, pp. xii, 255, 40s.

The low standard of medical practice in Dublin, as far as is known, was first publicly commented on in 1619 by Dermot O'Meara, whose son Edmund, also a physician, subsequently became an Honorary Fellow of the London College of Physicians. A year earlier (1618) Paul de Laune, brother of Gideon who had so much to do with the incorporation of the Society of Apothecaries in 1617, obtained the Fellowship of the London College and about 1622 left for Ireland where he became physician to Lord Deputy Falkland. It is not perhaps surprising to find him associated with O'Meara and three other physicians in an approach to the London College in the summer of 1626 seeking information about its constitution and government, for about that time Charles I had given his blessing to a plan to set up in Dublin a College of Physicians modelled on that founded in London just over a hundred years earlier. Why this plan failed is not clear; and thirty-six more years were to elapse before a Society was established that was to have any continuity.

More than once in this history reference is made to the absence of original records of the College until we reach the nineteenth century. This lack has obviously imposed a severe handicap on Dr. Widdess in the production of his book, in which incidentally, although there are several references to the London College, the initial approach in 1626 is not mentioned.

The loss of nearly all the earlier documents is attributed to the fact that the College had no permanent home until 1863. How its own Hall was eventually obtained is told in a chapter, more than half of which is about Dominic John Corrigan, through whose exertions and in whose Presidency a permanent home was secured. This biographical approach is prominent throughout the book and is revealed in the heading of some of the chapters, as c. 5 'Lucas, Ould, and Molyneux'; c. 11 'John Cheyne'; c. 12 'Graves and Stokes'; c. 14 'Osborne to Kirkpatrick'.

An interestingly written history, this book falls a little short as a work of reference. The author's sources are given in the bibliography on pp. 245–7; unfortunately they are not always identified or easily recognized in the text. The index is selective in that, for example, it gives only one reference to 'Dun's Book' (p. 14), but a more explicit reference to what it is (on p. 34) is omitted. The College changed its title to Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in 1890, but no mention of this change could be found in the index. A few misprints were found (e.g. 'Clive' for 'Cline' on p. 137, and 'co-called' for 'so-called' on p. 164) which may be presently corrected.

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