

## Book Reviews

upon manuscript sources, many not previously exploited and some in private hands. Insights abound into not only Simon's career, presented on a decidedly unheroic scale, but also the many lives he touched during these years – including Hideyo Noguchi, William Osler, William Welch, and the author's uncle (and writer of reports on medical education), Abraham Flexner. If some of the description of late-nineteenth-century American medicine is tediously familiar, the intrinsic interest of the sections on Helen's relationships with Bertrand Russell and with her sister Carey (feminist and president of Bryn Mawr College) compensates in full.

The crafting of this work shows the narrative skill that won the author a Pulitzer Prize Citation for his biography of George Washington. For the medical historian, a couple of evenings spent with *An American saga* make a splendid busman's holiday.

John Harley Warner  
Wellcome Institute

BARBARA SICHERMAN, *Alice Hamilton. A life in letters*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. xvi, 460, £20.00.

Alice Hamilton (1869–1970) is best known through her 1943 autobiography, *Exploring the dangerous trades*, as a pioneer in American industrial medicine. This elegantly written and carefully edited volume of Hamilton letters provides more than a new biographical perspective on a medical field. Drawing upon her extensive knowledge and sensitive melding of medical and women's history, Sicherman presents us with a richly textured "life in letters" of one of the twentieth century's more remarkable human beings.

Hamilton came of age as a woman physician in the late nineteenth century, caught in the strictures of Victorian gentility yet entangled in the excitement of social reform and the promise of medical science. The letters, and Sicherman's generous introductions, provide wonderful insight into how Hamilton struggled with these conflicting tensions to redesign industrial medicine and actively participate in critical political and social events.

Medical historians will find particularly interesting the details of her skill in gaining entry into industrial plants, her solutions to a wide variety of occupational health problems, and her ways of handling the outrageous institutional discrimination against her, particularly as the first woman faculty member at Harvard. But the meaning of her life will be diminished if historians read only to learn about this part of her commitments. Her importance as a central figure at Chicago's famous Hull House and in women's international peace work is crucial to understanding Hamilton as an individual and physician-researcher. It is impossible to comprehend either her medical or social reform work alone.

Unlike the autobiography written with insight but self-consciousness at seventy-four, this collection of letters allows us to see Hamilton as she creates herself, personally and publicly, till the very end of her long life. As a "work in two voices", Sicherman allows Hamilton to control the book, but not to overwhelm it. This volume is a fascinating example of how far an edited collection of letters can take us, but also how much more it makes us want to know. A full-scale biography of Hamilton is still very much needed.

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JOHN DUFFY, *The Tulane University Medical Center: one hundred and fifty years of medical education*, Baton Rouge and London, Louisiana State University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. xiv, 253, illus., [no price stated].

From the time he wrote *The Rudolph Matas history of medicine in Louisiana* (1958), John Duffy has been the acknowledged authority on the medical history of New Orleans. Accordingly, when Tulane University wanted to commission a history of its medical centre in

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the city to mark the sesquicentennial anniversary of its inception as the Medical College of Louisiana in 1834, Professor Duffy was the obvious choice as its author.

A history of any American medical school with old roots can be useful as a case study of how nineteenth-century proprietary schools with tiny, part-time faculties were transformed into massive, university-based centres for medical research and teaching. But even for the historian who does not particularly care about Tulane, that medical school holds special interest. In the mid-nineteenth century, for example, its flourishing condition was bound in part to the aggressive demands of southern nationalists for a distinctively southern medicine. The shaping of medical education by politics was also stark after the Civil War during Reconstruction, and during the reign of the demagogue Huey Long in the 1920s and 1930s. Further, from its start, the school had a symbiotic relationship with the Charity Hospital, one of the country's largest, and was a centre for studying tropical diseases on American soil. Tulane was also among the few schools in the South that Abraham Flexner deemed in his 1910 report to be worth salvaging, and is now one of the region's leading schools. Yet those directing the medical centre's course have persistently been troubled by the difficulties involved in reconciling its national reputation and regional identification.

The author mentions all these topics. But, by and large, he declines to explore any of them in depth, and thereby to give broader import to what remains a study of substantially parochial interest. Determined to give a balanced account of the institution – the banal along with the extraordinary – too often he fails to exploit its singularities. Racial integration at Tulane's medical school (the first black student was admitted in 1963), for example, receives scarcely more than twice the space allotted to medical students' participation in college football. Indeed, the relationship of the school to New Orleans's large population of Blacks is scarcely mentioned for the period before the 1950s. Perhaps, though, a photograph the author uses to illustrate an anatomy class at the school in 1890s makes up for the relative neglect in the text. In the photograph, fourteen white dissectors crowd around tables occupied by two black corpses. Notwithstanding its limitations, the book Duffy has produced is an able narrative history, solidly grounded in archival records, of one institution.

John Harley Warner  
Wellcome Institute

EVERETT MENDELSON (editor), *Transformation and tradition in the sciences. Essays in honor of I. Bernard Cohen*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, 8vo, pp. xiv, 578, £40.00.

Professor I. Bernard Cohen of Harvard University is one of the last living of the veteran historians of science whose professional career began before the second world war. An associate of George Sarton, his successor in the editorial chair of *Isis*, and a distinguished historian of physics, Cohen has been most notable during the last thirty years for many important contributions to Newtonian studies, a line of work started in collaboration with Alexandre Koyré. Naturally, the majority of the papers here presented to Bernard Cohen by former pupils and Harvard colleagues in the history of science reflect Cohen's own preoccupation with physical science; readers of *Medical History* may, no doubt, be familiar with the names of John Murdoch, A.I. Sabra, Gerald Holton, Arnold Thackray, and others but will not expect any particular notice of their contributions here. They have appeared in time for Cohen's seventieth birthday but some, it seems, intended for his sixty-fifth, have already been printed elsewhere.

There are, however, a number of papers by historians of chemistry, biology, and medicine, among them Allen Debus, Shirley Roe, Frederic (Larry) Holmes, and the editor of this *Festschrift*, all or most of them well-known figures in the library of the Wellcome Institute. In fact, all the discussions of eighteenth-century topics have at least a loose relation to the history of medicine, from Debus on eighteenth-century Paracelsians (truly, it seems, backward-looking figures in the "Age of the Enlightenment" [*sic*]) to Robert Schofield's useful essay on the origins of Coleridge's idealism in the Cambridge Platonists and Joseph Priestley. Victor Hilts discovers enlightenment precursors of eugenics, while Dr Roe offers a