

Book Reviews

SIR NEIL CANTLIE, *A history of the Army Medical Department*, Edinburgh and London, Churchill Livingstone, 1974, 2 vols., pp. x, 519; x, 448, maps, £12.00.

Reviewed by Miss K. E. Crow, Ph.D., Wellcome Research Fellow, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.

A serious examination of the relationship between medicine and the British Army has long been needed, but although General Cantlie's two volumes represent many years of work and contain a mass of fascinating information, they are closer in form to the traditional narrative history than to the administrative study, and are unlikely to satisfy the academic historian. There is much superfluous military detail—a paragraph, for example, is devoted to the Danish expedition of 1807, although the final sentence declares that “the medical arrangements are unimportant”—and there is no sustained attempt at analysis. Indeed, the initial impression left by this work is more of a series of campaigns illustrated by medical detail, instead of the growth and development of medical organization in response to the demands of war.

When the primary sources for much of the period covered by these books (1642–1898) are so rich, it is a pity to find so much willingness to rely upon secondary sources such as Fortescue, Sir Arthur Bryant and the rather unreliable Gore. Their information may have been checked with the original sources, but the likelihood of this cannot be gauged easily, for, incredibly in a work intended to be authoritative, there is no bibliography. A comprehensive survey of the manuscript and printed material concerning army medicine in Great Britain would have been of inestimable value for future research, but information about the former can be gleaned only from the references at the end of each chapter, and this is by no means exhaustive. There is a short chapter on military medical writers at the end of volume 2, together with a list of printed works up to 1888, but this includes only a part of their total output, and makes no mention of their many articles in the medical journals of the day.

General Cantlie does give sickness statistics and staff/patient ratios wherever possible, but on many occasions he omits to state their source. Brief details are also given of the causes and treatment of the various ills endured by the soldiers in each campaign, but here one of the main drawbacks of the narrative form becomes apparent. As the same diseases — malaria, typhus and dysentery — occurred so frequently, there is much repetition of clinical data. This could have been avoided if perhaps one chapter in each volume had been focussed on disease and military surgery, in which ideas on these topics might have been traced through the medical literature of the period, to show how far army practice agreed with or differed from that in civil life.

The provision of good maps is always a problem: here they are adequate in terms of size, but there is little on them beyond rivers, cities, battle-sites, and hospital stations mentioned in the text. Some indication of the main road systems, and major variations in terrain would have illuminated the difficulties felt in evacuating the sick and wounded. The map of Spain and Portugal is marred by a number of small mistakes: frontiers between countries are not drawn in; “ANDULASIA” appears instead of “ANDALUSIA”; no dot marks Madrid; Lisbon appears at first glance to be on the left bank of the Tagus, and the harbour of Passages several miles up the Nive instead of a few miles west of the mouth of the Bidassoa.

Book Reviews

The regimental surgeon was probably the most important officer in the army medical service, and would have repaid a study in depth, but many basic questions about him remain unanswered. Exactly what proportion of military surgeons for example, came from Scotland and Ireland, and how many were drawn from London, or the poorer areas of England? If they were apprenticed, what periods did their indentures usually cover, and had they frequent opportunities of attending the local hospitals? Was the number of those who studied medicine at the universities so low as is generally suggested—how many attended the courses without actually taking a degree? Furthermore, what was the total cost of an average medical education, and which families would be able to afford it? In all these respects, how did the military surgeon compare with the usual medical attendants of the poorer classes from whom the greater part of the army was drawn? It would be interesting to know the average age of the surgeon when first commissioned, the average length of service, and the number of and time between promotions. Information like this would help to build up a more realistic image of conditions within the medical service, against which the truth of contemporary comments could be tested, and even if the evidence for such an analysis were available only from the late eighteenth century onwards, the attempt would still be valuable. It must be admitted, however, that the history of the army medical department from 1642 to 1898 provides sufficient material for several studies, and these two volumes certainly ought to stimulate more interest in this hitherto neglected subject.

RUDOLPH E. SIEGEL, *Galen on psychology, psychopathology, and function and diseases of the nervous system*, Basle, S. Karger, 1973, pp. xii, 310, £17.10.

It is a remarkable paradox that a man who was so influential in the practice of medicine has suffered so much neglect at the hands of historians of medicine. Thus, studies on Galen have been relatively few until the last six years or so. One who has attempted to redress the balance is the American, Dr. R. E. Siegel, for this is his third book on Galen's physiology and medicine, the earlier volumes appearing in 1968 (physiology and medicine), and 1970 (sense perception). His original project is now completed.

Dr. Siegel is concerned with Galen, not with Galenism, and looks first at his ideas concerning the biological organization and integrative functions of the nervous system. Galen's concept of causality and his teleology are discussed, and then various nervous system activities such as autonomic control, form and function of skeletal muscle, neural control, nerve conduction, and the reflex. His psychology, especially as concerns the soul, consciousness and abnormal sense perception, his concept of temperaments, humoral types, free will and emotion, is next considered. Finally, there is Galen on causes of disease, and on diseases of the nervous system. As in his earlier books, Dr. Siegel documents his textual material thoroughly, and includes plentiful translated passages, many appearing here for the first time in English. There is an extensive bibliography, and the index refers also to material in the first two volumes of the series.

The book, therefore, is full of most interesting and useful data, but, as in Dr. Siegel's previous two parts of the trilogy, there are grave defects of methodology and of interpretation. First, throughout the book an attempt is made to interpret Galen's writings