

and Sir Samuel Garth, a physician at one time considered to be the literary heir of John Dryden but now more reminiscent of McGonagall; here are also modest and unsung heroes such as John Hillary, unjustly unremembered for the first description of tropical sprue. The essays are laced with quotations from diaries and letters, such as that by Dr John Fothergill to Bodley's librarian at Oxford:

'I do not know of anything that would give me more pain than to reside a few months at Oxford. There I should discover men of the first rate of understanding, partly from want of opportunity, but much more from indolence, absorpt in an insignificant round of doing that which the lowest mankind enjoy as much as themselves: eating, drinking, and sleeping.'

Shades of Zuleika Dobson and Brideshead! Fothergill was a Quaker and thereby excluded from the Oxbridge of his day; moreover, like some of the others described in these pages, '... he came from an area of England where the inhabitants had not been enervated by subservience to a leisured, aristocratic ruling class. . . . They were freeholders, and they developed a sturdy independence of thought and spirit which persists to this day.'

Booth has the gift of being able to use small details to create a broad canvas of social and political history, and, in so doing, to relate advances in medicine to the spirit of the times. Moreover, although medicine is the theme, as suggested by the title, there are some fascinating glimpses of history. The account of the events surrounding the secession of the American colonies and the Declaration of Independence is detailed and vivid; parallels with the events associated with the collapse of the British Empire two centuries later are uncomfortable reading and call to mind Toynbee's dictum that those who do not learn the lessons of history are forced to repeat them.

The book ends on a different note. There is a spirited polemic in defence of clinical research, based in part on the Ludwig Heilmeyer lecture which I heard given in Dusseldorf by the author in apparently flawless German; now that I can understand it, I still agree with it. It is his memoirs of Hammersmith Hospital, Northwick Park, and the Medical Research Council that strike a discordant note. It may have seemed logical to extend the theme of the earlier essays up to the present day, but here his objectivity as a historian is undermined by his own involvement in the events that he describes. No doubt these were meant to be 'warts and all' accounts, but there don't seem to be any warts, only marvellous and talented people doing wonderful things, sometimes against heroic odds. But, while it is too soon for an impartial

assessment, these chapters are not lacking in interest, and they do chronicle significant events and personalities. More to the point, in no way do they diminish the earlier part of the book. It is a pleasure to recommend a book by a contemporary which can stand as a work of history and a work of literature, and which is highly readable, instructive and, above all, enjoyable. Moreover, unlike almost every other book reviewed in these columns, the price is right.

DAVID WINGATE

Current hepatology. Vol 7. Edited by G Gitnick. (Pp. 429; illustrated.) Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1987.

There are so many progress volumes, updates/recent advances, that one wonders who has time to read them all or what particular groups of hepatologists, gastroenterologists or practising physicians they are intended to serve, but in my view Gary Gitnick's continuing volumes on *Current hepatology* are very worthwhile. This is now volume 7. As in previous volumes he has contributors with widely differing literary and reviewing styles, seeming to add rather than detract from one's interest in reading through the volume. The raciness of Dr Koretz in looking at new clinical and laboratory findings on acute hepatitis, in the light of the well entrenched ideas and views, contrasts with the careful appraisals of Drs Overby and Kaplowitz in chapters on the serology of liver disease and drug induced hepatotoxicity. Reichen and Preisgn have the all embracing title of cirrhosis, but as might be expected concentrate on their own unit's particular interest in hepatic handling of drugs. They also review papers published in the last year on the natural history and prognosis of cirrhosis of different types including that of the alcoholic and PBC.

Hal Conn's chapter, 137 pages with 454 references, is out of balance with respect to the other chapters, but it is a masterly review and is certainly the best available on the complications of portal hypertension and of the ever increasing literature.

The confusing area of bile excretory function and cholestasis is explained clearly in another excellent chapter. The other chapters on primary liver cancer, hepatobiliary imaging, liver transplantation and the biliary tract are all very adequate reviews. The volume is to be recommended.

ROGER WILLIAMS

Abdominal ultrasound By C A Mittelstaedt. (Pp. 720; illustrated; £130.00.) Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1987.

Abdominal ultrasound is now established as a