

Reginald Passmore, *Fellows of Edinburgh's College of Physicians during the Scottish Enlightenment*, Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians, 2001, pp. viii, 132, illus., £10.00 (paperback 0-85405-057-4). Orders to: Royal College of Physicians, 9 Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JQ, Scotland.

The Scottish Enlightenment was a remarkable era, during which individuals such as the philosopher David Hume, the economist Adam Smith and others such as the geologist James Hutton and the moral philosopher Adam Ferguson made important and original contributions to the intellectual life of their time. It was also a period when the newly founded Medical School in Edinburgh inherited, after its foundation in 1726, the position of Leiden as the leading centre for medical education in Europe.

In this volume, the late Reginald Passmore has described the lives of sixteen Fellows of the College of Physicians in Edinburgh who made important contributions to the teaching and practice of medicine during that period. All have been accorded their place in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, so that one has to ask why the need for further biographies. The answer is that these biographical vignettes have a particularly Edinburgh flavour, which illustrate the importance of their specifically medical contribution to the Scottish Enlightenment. The first is John Rutherford (1695–1779), pioneering teacher of medicine at the Medical School, and the last James Gregory (1753–1821), remembered today for his famous powder. Nine of the sixteen were Presidents of the College. Most practised or taught in Edinburgh, some like William Cullen (1710–1790) and Joseph Black (1728–1799) after moving from Glasgow. Others, for example James Lind (1716–1794) and Sir John Pringle (1707–1782), made their major contributions whilst working in England. The piece on William Cullen is particularly perceptive, and those on Black and Daniel Rutherford (1749–1819) illustrate the importance of Edinburgh in the development of chemistry and the knowledge of the new gases. William Buchan (1729–1805)

merits an entry for his highly successful *Domestic medicine*.

The book, however, is not content with biography. There are also chapters on clinical teaching in the Royal Infirmary, the *Edinburgh pharmacopoeia*, new understanding of chemistry and the nervous system and nervous disorders. In addition, there is Enlightenment advice to teenage girls, as illustrated by the letters of John Gregory in his *Legacy to his daughters* and the letters of Alexander Monro *primus* to his daughter Margaret, previously published by the College in 1995 under the title *The professor's daughter: an essay on female conduct*. There is also a brief piece on nepotism, in view of the remarkable dynasty of Monros who taught anatomy at Edinburgh and the successive generations of Rutherfords and Gregorys.

The Edinburgh College continues to make important contributions to medical history. The volume is entertaining to read and a valuable addition to the literature of the Scottish Enlightenment. It should be recommended to all who are interested in that remarkable period of Edinburgh history.

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Christopher Lawrence, *Rockefeller money, the laboratory, and medicine in Edinburgh 1919–1930: new science in an old country*, University of Rochester Press, 2005, pp. ix, 373, £60.00, \$85.00 (hardback 1-58046-195-6).

Amongst Canadian historians, the “Laurentian thesis” (named for the St Lawrence river) is an argument for master narratives rooted in a purportedly national experience. Amongst medical historians, the writings of Christopher Lawrence add up to a “Lawrentian thesis” of their own, but one that debunks national and master narratives. Lawrence’s earlier, much-cited works identify a group of “patrician” London consultants who resisted scientific specialization in medicine. While Lawrence provided brilliant insight into these groups, he