

### Book Reviews

been teaching anatomy for some two years, but Morgan immediately took it upon himself to arrange the opening of a medical school attached to the College of Philadelphia, without any consultation with his erstwhile fellow student.

Morgan's remarkable inaugural lecture in May 1765, *A Discourse upon the Institution of Medical Schools in America* was the climax of his career, and his plans and recommendations affected American medicine for over a generation. It also sparked off the hostility which vexed him ever after. His quarrel with Shippen flared and flourished over the following years, and though commanding great respect and a considerable reputation as a physician, Morgan produced no more scientific work, nor did his teaching ever rise above the didactic and superficial, and he died in 1785 an embittered man, as his latest portrait clearly shows.

Mr. Whitfield Bell is a librarian of the American Philosophical Society, of which John Morgan was a leading founder member. Mr. Bell gives us a sympathetic and understanding appraisal of Morgan's life, in a well written and much needed biography. The stories of Morgan's European tour, of the foundation of the Philadelphia school, and especially of the background of military service on the frontier and during the War of Independence, are particularly well told.

Mr. Bell has no illusions about the defects in the character of his subject, but might perhaps have attempted to discuss in more detail why it was that Morgan became involved in so inveterate a quarrel with William Shippen, failing completely to realize that the full realization of his ambitions over the medical school depended greatly upon Shippen's co-operation. Perhaps Mr. Bell should attempt to answer these questions with a study of Shippen himself.

The book is supplied with good notes and index, and is to be recommended to medical men and historians on both sides of the Atlantic, as a satisfactory study of an interesting physician, and of a fascinating period in American history.

K. BRYN THOMAS

*Spencer Wells, the Life and Work of a Victorian Surgeon*, by JOHN A. SHEPHERD, Edinburgh and London, E. & S. Livingstone, 1965, pp. 132, illus., 30s.

The name of Spencer Wells is better known than that of almost any other surgeon. The reason for this is given in the very last sentence of this interesting biography—'In most operating theatres in Great Britain surgeons do not ask the sister for artery forceps but simply say "Spencer Wells"'. Yet the main achievement of this famous surgeon was not the invention of an artery forceps (for in fact he did but modify the form of the forceps) but because, as Treves put it, 'by his determination he succeeded in founding abdominal surgery as we know it.'

Mr. Shepherd has done the profession a notable service in making the details of Spencer Wells' career available. He has examined every available source and has written a very readable book. Incidentally, his account of the history of ovariectomy is very comprehensive and the best that has yet been written.

Spencer Wells was born in 1818. His family was humble and he had to fight his own way through life. He became a pupil of a doctor at Barnsley and later studied at Leeds, Dublin, and at St. Thomas's Hospital, London. Qualifying M.R.C.S. in 1841 he joined the Navy in which he remained for 15 years. He was posted to the Malta

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naval hospital where he gained good general experience. Then his health became poor and he went on half pay for a time, during which he spent a year at Smyrna and Renkioi (in the Crimean War), and even began practice in London and gained an appointment at the Samaritan Hospital, which at that time was an insignificant place. He retired from the Navy in 1856 and concentrated on surgical work at the Samaritan, which he soon made famous by his operations for ovarian tumours. He did not equal the brilliance of Lawson Tait but he made a great impression on the surgical profession by keeping and publishing a full and faithful record of all the operations he performed. He gradually modified his technique, adopted the antiseptic methods, and proved to all impartial observers that ovariectomy was a justifiable life-saving operation. Moreover he showed that other operations within the abdomen could safely be performed and thus prepared the way for further advances.

Spencer Wells prospered, was elected to the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons and became President of that august body in 1883. He supported Sir Henry Thompson in his advocacy of cremation, bought an estate at Golders Green, and died in 1897. He won through, not by brilliance nor originality, but by determination and by the honesty with which he recorded all his work.

This book needed to be written and Mr. Shepherd has done his task well. The illustrations are numerous and excellent and the significant design on the book cover is by the author's wife.

ZACHARY COPE

*The Evolution of Pharmacy in Britain*, ed. by F. N. L. POYNTER, London, Pitman Medical Publishing Company, 1965, pp. 240, 37s. 6d.

This book is a collection of papers on the rise and development of British pharmacy, read at the Fourth British Congress on the History of Medicine and Pharmacy held at the University of Nottingham in September 1963. A masterly introduction by Professor G. E. Trease on how the trader in spices became the apothecary and medical practitioner, the druggist and the pharmacist, is followed by a paper from Dr. T. D. Whittet on his specialized knowledge of the important part that has been played by pharmacy in our hospitals since Roman times. We may hope that Miss G. M. Watson's 'Some trading accounts in the eighteenth century' will encourage more research on the little we know of provincial hospital pharmacy in that century. The history of the adulteration of drugs is dealt with by F. G. Stock of the Birmingham Analytical Laboratory, that of their presentation by C. Gunn of the Leicester University School of Pharmacy, and that of their standards by Dr. Betty Jackson of Sunderland Technical College. The origins of professional education are summarized by Dr. M. P. Earles; Dr. R. S. Roberts outlines his recent excellent study of the import of drugs, and Mrs. Margaret Stiles shows how the Quakers have maintained the reputation of pharmacists since the seventeenth century.

When we add to these studies, all written with the clarity of deep knowledge, the learned survey of herbals and formularies by L. G. Matthews, we have a volume that not only covers the technical aspects of the subject, but also throws valuable light on its place in our social history.

R. R. TRAIL