BOOK REVIEW

The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. Its First Century, 1862-1962. By Robert S. Henry, A.B., LL.B., Litt.D. Office of the Surgeon General, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1964, 422 pp. buckram.[1]

This unusual book, which describes the various stages of development of the institution concerned from its humble beginning in 1862 as the Army Medical Museum, in a single room in the then office of the Surgeon General and with for years a special appropriation of only $5,000, to (after two other moves) the building in which Ford's Theatre had been located until the assassination of President Lincoln, and finally in 1955 (after 67 years in the first building of its own), to the magnificent, bomb-resistant building it now occupies in the Walter Reed Medical Center, might be expected to be another dust-dry government report. It is, however, quite otherwise. Written in free style, it deals with the many personalities concerned, at times in anecdotal fashion, and contains much historical material of general interest. One will find no special information about leprosy here, but this review is offered because of the world-wide influence of the Institute.

It is difficult to realize how "under-developed" medicine was at the time when, on May 1, 1862, Surgeons J. H. Brinton and J. J. Woodward

[1]For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, at $4.25.

were ordered to the Surgeon-General's office for the purpose of preparing a medical and surgical history of the Civil War, with Brinton responsible for the surgical part and Woodward for the medical part. A few months later they were ordered also to proceed with the plan to organize an Army Medical Museum, with Brinton as curator. Much credit is due him for his efforts to develop the museum, but there is more interest in Woodward's work connected with pathology.

At that time, it seems, stains had not yet been introduced for the study of the tissues. In May 1864 Woodward wrote to Rudolf Virchow, asking if he had "used aniline or any of its derivatives for coloring microscopical specimens." There is no record that Virchow ever replied to the unknown inquirer, but Woodward himself was using them then as revealed in a paper published in 1865. "So it appears that, working independently in the Army Medical Museum, young Woodward had hit upon and developed one of the great basic techniques of the pathologist."

Woodward, working together with a younger man, Dr. Edward Curtis, developed photomicrography, reports of which work were published in 1865, 1866 and 1867. At first they used the sun as the light source, the room darkened to serve as the camera to avoid the need of bellows, the microscope mounted in the window space, and a heliostat outside to catch the sun—when there was any. The photomicrographs were made on wet collodion plates prepared as needed. Later (1869), Woodward tried artificial lighting, and electricity (from a bank of batteries) was found to be the best. The accomplishments were remarkable, especially in view of the crude compound microscope available at the time. A picture of a diatom at 2,540 magnification is shown.

Woodward, incidentally, was not an early convert of the "germ theory" of disease. He is quoted as saying, in 1872, that "the question remains in the domain of mere speculation"; and in 1879 he employed the derisive term "bacteriafanatics," and spoke of "those convenient bacteria which have played so conspicuous a part in pathological speculations." [He can be excused for his conservatism when one considers the time when the leprosy bacillus was observed—rather vaguely—by Hansen (1873), and was stained by Neisser (1879), and when the tubercle bacillus was demonstrated by Koch (1882). The reviewer himself recalls lively discussions of the "germ theory" among the adults of his family and their friends about 1900, when he was but a child.]

Woodward and Curtis had a "melancholy mission" when they were called to the White House to remove the bullet from the head of assassinated President Lincoln. The strictly objective report of Woodward, and the more subjective account of Curtis, are both given. Curtis got some of Lincoln's blood on the cuffs of his shirt, and his wife cut them off and saved them; they are still to be seen in the Medical Museum. From them the type of Lincoln's blood has been determined. In 1881 Woodward participated, as recorder, in the autopsy of another assassinated president, President James A. Garfield. His health failing, that was the last year of his service in the Army Medical Museum, although it is said that he served as president of the American Medical Association in 1882, the only medical officer so honored.

So much for some of the older historical material in this book. The complexities of the developments from the simple old Army Medical Museum to the present elaborately organized Institute, and of the many trials and tribulations met with along the way, are, in their own fashion, hardly less interesting. The Institute is now a tri-service organization (Army, Navy, and Air Force) with a personnel of some 650; it has affiliations with the Veterans Administration and the USPHS, and has active cooperation from and service to civilian medicine.

The Institute's mission is three-fold—education, consultation, and

research. The medical museum still appears as a department in the table of organization, but the Department of Pathology is the most important one; the others are the Medical Illustration Service and the American Registry of Pathology. This last named unit comprises 27 registries of different medical specialties, each with its own sponsor organization; one of them is the Registry of Leprosy, sponsored by the Leonard Wood Memorial. The Department of Pathology, with a staff of some 45 professional and administrative workers, has eight divisions some of them with multiple branches; one of these (under Dr. Chapman H. Binford, now medical director of the Leonard Wood Memorial), deals with leprosy.

The Army Medical Museum did not go to the new Institute with the other departments, but is now in the "old red brick" that it used to occupy, "which in itself is a true museum piece." It is planned that certain of the facilities now in the new building will be returned to this place, thus relieving some of the "population pressure" there.

Leprosy is mentioned as indicated above, and also—incidentally and unfortunately—in one of lantern slides developed for instruction use in the Museum, shown in one of the illustrations. The message of this slide is that "A syphilitic woman may be as fair as a rose to the first glance" (a rose is pictured) "but more dangerous than a leper." This slide was made, apparently, during the first World War.

—H. W. WADE

SUSTAINING MEMBERS

(*List under revision*)