
Within the last two decades an increasing number of professional historians have been directing their attention to medical history. Dean of these is Richard H. Shryock, director of the John Hopkins Institute of the History of Medicine. Thomas N. Bonner is a talented newcomer to this group. He first attracted notice from the medical profession in 1952-1953, while he was dean of William Woods College, through his articles “Dr. Nathan Smith Davis and Growth of Chicago Medicine 1850-1900” and “The Social and Political Attitudes of Midwestern Physicians 1840-1940: Chicago as a Case History.” He is now associate professor of history and chairman of the department of social sciences at the University of Omaha.

The present volume was prepared under a special fellowship provided by the Chicago Medical Society. The studies just mentioned together with one on Dr. Bayard Holmes made the selection of Dr. Bonner as writer for “a history of medicine in the Chicago area in its geographic, social, racial, and economic environment” the logical one. The editing of the manuscript was done by Miss Gayle Thornbrough of the Indiana Historical Bureau. Appropriately, the foreword is by Dr. Shryock.

Medicine in Chicago is essentially a social history. It deals with the origin and development of the city’s medical schools and hospitals, the story of its professional societies and publications, its emergence as a force in twentieth century medicine, the expansion of medical education, the progress of public health work, the interrelation of the medical profession and the public, etc. This perspective represents a departure from most medico-historical treatises which focus attention on outstanding personalities, their ideas and deeds, rather than on the social implications of medicine. In spite of this perspective, however, the individual lives of Chicago’s medically great are by no means neglected; but such biographic material as is incorporated will be found to be deftly interwoven with the greater story of how Chicago grew from a small disease-ridden settlement—and became
the great medical center it is today.” The study is a solid one, fully documented, constituting in Dr. Shryock’s opinion the most thorough analysis of the medical experience of an American city that has thus far been made.

That a degree of discord between the writer and the sponsoring group came to exist may be presumed from the “Statement” introduced by the Committee on Medical History of the Chicago Medical Society. After averring that the author was given freedom to tell the story in his own way, the members proceed to say: “Frankly, this Committee disagrees with some of Dr. Bonner’s conclusions and his appraisal of some of the personalities and events that made medical history in Chicago.” “A layman,” they explain, “may not always appreciate the power that some esoteric factors such as the Code of Medical Ethics have on the lives of members of the medical profession.”

This is the difference of viewpoint to be expected between those seeing medicine from the inside and those viewing it from without. The great merit of the work lies in the very circumstance that by playing down the personal aspects of medical history a record is achieved which turns out to be more or less typical of the course of medical development in the metropolitan center. The illustrations are few and in two instances none too happily chosen. The style is that commonly found in factual exposition, neither particularly pedestrian nor especially stimulating.

Medicine in Chicago should appeal both to the general reader and to the physician. For Indianans the study has significance as a notable contribution to the socio-cultural and medical development of the Midwest.

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This report of research done in 1953-1954 under a grant from the Committee of 100 of South Bend and Mishawaka describes the manufacturing structure and pattern of the area at that time and appraises them in the light of the research tools of the urban geographer. Its purposes are: to provide