

B O O K R E V I E W S

Renzo Dionigi, Giovanni Battista Palletta (1748-1832) Protochirurgo all'ospedale Maggiore di Milano, Cisalpino Istituto Editoriale Universitario, Milano 2016, pp. 172 (Euro 24,00)

Our historiography had essentially overlooked the figure of the surgeon Giovanni Battista Palletta. There are only a few mentions in the history of surgery or in the history of Milano, and even the great Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, did not mention this figure. So it is quite clear that no one had hitherto embarked on an overall study of his ergobiographical profile, although he could be said to be one of the most well-reputed surgeons of his time. It is also recognized that from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Italian surgery excelled in Lombardia. While Antonio Scarpa, University of Pavia, was the major authority in the academic sphere, in the Ospedale Maggiore of Milano stood out Giovanni Battista Palletta and Giovanni Battista Monteggia, both from Lago Maggiore. We know almost everything about Antonio Scarpa because the history of medicine has dealt with him several times, and we know that to Giovanni Battista Monteggia (Laveno 1762-Milano 1815) was dedicated a conference [*Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Laveno, 1 dicembre 2012, Edizioni Marwan*] a few years ago at Laveno, his native country. On the contrary it appears very difficult to know the outlines of the life and work of Palletta. Therefore, the hard work faced by Renzo Dionigi, surgeon himself, and the results presented in this volume appeared in the series "Fonti e studi per la storia dell'Università di Pavia" with the introduction written by Giorgio Cosmacini, are really very remarkable. Palletta, whose surname in some of ancient documents was Paletta, received his first education in the Collegio dei Gesuiti in Briga and in 1767 he went to Ospedale Maggiore in Milano in order to become a student in surgery. Then he went to Padua and graduated in Medicine and Philosophy in 1776. The following year he returned to the hospital in

Milano, where he later became a surgeon and a professor of anatomy and surgery. About Palletta as surgeon Dionigi wrote about all his scientific production starting from 1777. About Palletta as a human being we can mention his grumpy disposition and his ever-independent mind. He looked like a shabby man during the last few years: tall, thin, limping through the streets of the city, leaning against a walking stick, wearing a rough coat and a battered old hat. Unmarried, he died eighty-four in the evening of August 27, 1832, leaving a large estate to his nephew Marco - son of his brother - who had graduated in Medicine in 1830 [G. Armocida, Marco Palletta (1806-1891) proprietario della villa di Angera, "Rivista della Società Storica Varesina", XXXIII, 2016, pp. 111-126)]. Palletta had extraordinary surgical skills and he was also known abroad due to his expertise. Dionigi reminds us that his skills were certainly higher than those of the masters who had taught him. He was a representative of a medicine that was facing the nineteenth-century transformations, and without change of mind he counted on the local pathology of Morgagni inheritance. Palletta took part in the early stages of that movement. The volume presents him as the protagonist of a surgery "characterized by wise eclecticism" (p.134).

Mauro Melato, Storia di un ospedale pediatrico triestino. Il "Burlo", Edito dalla Società di Minerva. Archeografo triestino, Trieste 2018, pp. 284

Mauro Melato, full Professor of Anatomia Patologica, University of Trieste, in 2010 became the chief of the IRCCS "Burlo Garofolo", which boasts a long and glorious history as an important triestine pediatric hospital. Gaining access to the archives of the institution I was able to gather the documentation that allowed him to produce this interesting volume. The appendix includes the statutes and following amendments. The history of a hospital is never restricted to the history of medicine that has guided its clinical and scientific

work in the running of time. A hospital is always a mirror of the surrounding society which has created it and has kept it active. Even the “Burlo”, therefore, is a chapter in the history of Trieste due to its task of assisting sick childhood. The opening of a pediatric hospital in the mid-nineteenth century was a real event in Trieste and Melato shows us how it could be possible to open it in 1841. He points out its intricate growth and transformation, parallel to the update of pediatric medicine, and he focuses on the scientific protagonists of the care during the last century. There are rediscovered several doctors also from the initiators of the project, some already known and others hidden and then rediscovered in the folds of history. Our historiography had not dealt with this hospital enough and therefore the volume written by Melato fills a gap placing itself as an incitement to continue research on the history of childhood and care institutions in Trieste.

Barbara Pezzoni, Pietro Pacifico Gamondi (1914-1993) *La missione umanitaria della medicina, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2017, pp. 100 (Euro 10,00)*

Barbara Pezzoni shows in her work the human and professional life story of Pietro Pacifico Gamondi. This helps us to become acquainted with a chapter rather overlooked by our historiography dealing with Italian physicians who in the mid-twentieth century went to work in Asia and Africa. They practiced western medicine but they paid attention to the local traditions. The look at the life of Gamondi, in particular at his choices, leads us to see a noteworthy chapter in the re-

cent history of medicine and it is very interesting that there were curiosity and interest in curing considering both biological science and anthropology. We must remember that in the colonial countries medicine had not always been practiced with the delicacy of feeling of physicians such as Gamondi. His attitude was to help people and he was also open to consider other anthropological situations in a sort of primitive world and about remedies used in their traditional medicine. Barbara Pezzoni mentions also the name of Antonio Scarpa, the founder of Istituto Italiano di Etnoiatria in Varese and collaborator of Gamondi. The coming great transformations in the field of biomedical science seemed to obscure ethnic curiosities but then the interest for a different medicine gained new vigor due to a desire to reflect beyond the scientific dogma. The work of Gamondi and physicians who like him had chosen to live in far and “primitive” places leads us to consider a critical reading of medical geography in order to understand what was happening among science, technology and life. Those physicians paid attention to the complexity of the intellectual and social conditions of the populations they met. Considering the vast issues related to today’s easiness of movement of people and things all around the world, a new Travel Medicine has been founded and its purpose is to inform about the risks of getting sick in moving from a country to another. Using new perspectives we can consider the risks of travel and moving of populations, the role of polluting substances, the problems about production and distribution of food, and finally the important influence of environmental and climatic variations on health.