Am 26. März 1940 schrieb André Weil an seine Schwester Simone: «Les réflexions qui suivent sont de deux sortes: Les unes portent sur l'histoire des nombres...». Nach gut 40 Jahren liegt die Ernte dieser Studien vor uns. Nach einer Protophase, in welcher sowohl die griechische, wie auch die babylonische, die indische und die frühere abendländische Mathematik besprochen werden, wendet sich Weil den vier Olympikern P. Fermat, L. Euler, L. Langrange und M.-L. Legendre zu. Fermat und seinen Briefpartnern ist das II. Kapitel gewidmet. Bereits der Umfang dieses Abschnittes deutet darauf hin, welche Bedeutung diesem ersten abendländischen Zahlentheoretiker zukommt. Mit wenigen Bruchstücken aus Diophant legte er die Fundamente der heutigen Zahlentheorien. Eulers zahlentheoretisches Werk steht im Mittelpunkt des Buches (S. 165–320). Weil zeigt an Hand von Eulers Korrespondenz und von dessen Abhandlungen, wie dieser zum fundamentalen Reziprozitätsgesetz gelangte. Langrange und Legendre schliessen Eulers Werk ab. Erst Gauss und Dirichlet beschreiten neue Wege. Das Buch von A. Weil ist keine Geschichte der Zahlentheorie, sondern führt uns, wie der Titel besagt, mittels historischer Betrachtungen in die schönsten Gefilde der königlichen Wissenschaft ein. Hierzu helfen insbesondere die trefflichen biographischen Angaben. Diese, sowie viele einführende Abschnitte des Werkes, sind auch für weitere Kreise verständlich abgefasst. Das Buch liefert unter anderem den Schlüssel zum Verständnis von Eulers zahlentheoretischen Arbeiten. Der Referent hat hierzu eine Konkordanz verfasst im Artikel: “Euler’s Work on Number Theory, A Concordance for A. Weil’s Number Theory”, *Historia Mathematica* 13 (1986). Wir beglückwünschen den Verlag zu dieser wohlfeilen und drucktechnisch hervorragenden deutschen Ausgabe, sie möge viele Leser durch Stunden und Jahre begleiten.

Johann Jakob Burckhardt

Claude E. Welch, *A twentieth-century surgeon. My life in the Massachusetts General Hospital*. Boston, Mass., Massachusetts General Hospital, 1992. XX, 392 S. Illustr. Portr. \$ 24.95. ISBN 0-88135-181-4.

The author is a prominent Boston surgeon whose entire career was centered around the Massachusetts General Hospital. In the late 40ies Boston was indeed the Mecca for foreign physicians and surgeons, and the M. G. H. was one of several prestigious hospitals they visited. However, in twentieth-century surgery many other medical centers were the leaders of spectacular advances. The devotion of the author to the M. G. H. and his alma mater, the Harvard Medical School, characteristic for his class, makes this “Twentieth

Century Surgery” an essentially local history. Whoever is interested in the history of the M.G.H. may find this book to be indeed an interesting, very abundant source. Part of this history pertains also to the 6th General Hospital, a field hospital staffed by the members of the M.G.H. engaged during the North African and Italian campaigns of the Second World War.

A general surgeon, the author unfortunately mentions only *en passant* the outstanding contributions of the world-famous M.G.H. surgeon Richard H. Sweet in thoracic, especially esophageal surgery, and of Robert E. Gross, a Harvard professor and pioneer in cardiac and pediatric surgery.

The reviewer also misses a short paragraph about the famous Boston surgeon Frank Lahey, founder of the internationally recognized Lahey Clinic.

Of a more general interest is the second part of the book concerning the complex organization of American medicine. Welch was not only a surgeon but must have spent an enormous amount of time as President and Committee Member of all the important medical and surgical associations.

As President of the Massachusetts Medical Society he was deeply involved with the “New England Journal of Medicine”, one of the most important medical publications in the world whose interesting history the author reviews in a separate chapter.

President of the Boston Surgical Society and of the prestigious American Surgical Association the author mentions some of the leading American surgeons and their accomplishments.

As a result of his participation in the governing bodies of both the American Medical Association and the American College of Surgeons the author gives the reader an idea about the complex bureaucratic organization, the past, present and future conflicts and problems of American medicine concerning hospital accreditation, post-graduate training, board certification, malpractice litigation, etc., etc.

Understandably the author, a busy general surgeon and professional man, does not discuss the two most important developments of our time, i.e. cardiac and transplantation surgery. Therefore, the title of his in many ways interesting reminiscences “A 20th Century Surgeon” may be somewhat misleading. However, all in all it is a broadly informative book about American, especially Bostonian medicine and surgery.   Andreas P. Naef