

BOOK REVIEW

The Chloroformist *by Christine Ball*

Paperback and other formats, 328 pages
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This biography of Joseph Clover 1825 - 1882, is a joy to read, and will be of value to all interested in 19th century surgery and medicine.

The author, Christine Ball, an anaesthetist and current holder of the Wood Library-Museum Laureate, began writing this when she found a notebook written by Clover while he was a medical student. She has drawn on this and a wide range of other sources to give us this rich picture, which, although based on the life of Clover, covers a wide range of topics relevant to the history of medicine at that time.

Apprenticed to a local practice in Norwich before going to University College London, Clover qualified as a doctor, and then as a surgeon, he worked for Liston, then Syme. He was present at Liston's operation with anaesthesia by Squires, and eventually become Medical Officer at University College, with a responsibility for anaesthesia. During his life he worked with other surgeons including Spencer Wells and Gamgee, who borrowed money shamelessly from him!

Never a pioneer of new agents he devised equipment to make anaesthesia safer. Most famous for his bag, which delivered a four percent mixture of chloroform and air, he experimented in his basement devising new equipment until the law preventing animal experimentation forbade this, and he and George Harley worked together to give advice to the Chloroform committee.

Throughout his life he invented surgical equipment, a dental prop, surgical sutures, a gag, a spoon for lithotomy, and a crutch to keep the legs apart during lithotomy.

He never used oxygen and he died just before the advent of local anaesthesia, but advised on consent, and was an early proponent of withholding food preoperatively. He was interested in resuscitation techniques. The book includes an account of a cobra bite, the development of the West End of London, the Great Exhibition, and the French Exhibition and much more.

This excellent book is well referenced and will appeal to a broad audience.

Ann Ferguson,
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