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Fallis, A. M.

Parasites, People, and Progress. Wall & Emerson, Inc., Toronto, 1993. 160 pp. ISBN 0-921332-39-4.

This book traces the history of parasitology in Canada by describing the careers of notable individuals (such as Wright, Osler, Todd, Walker, Hadwen, Watson, Cameron, and Wardle) and the origin and growth of institutions (such as the Institute of Parasitology, McGill University, and the transmogrified Ontario Research Foundation). The book summarizes the results of 100 years of government, medical, and academic institutionalization of parasitology in various provinces and regions. At first glance the presentation appears to be a traditional whig story. However, look a little deeper, for Dr. Fallis's well-written text supplies many subtle insights into factors involved in the history of the discipline.

The first professional parasitologists in Canada did not study the epidemics of malaria and typhus (Chapters 1 and 2). The appointment of the parasitologist Ramsey Wright at the University of Toronto was based on his strong training in natural history. Similarly, natural history of parasites captured the interest of William Osler and, even though he completed medical school, he first studied parasites of domestic animals before concentrating on human diseases.

The "Pioneers in Parasitology: 1900–1929" (Chapter 3) were influenced either by the needs of British colonialism operating in tropical environments or by the needs of an expanding agricultural industry. Dr. J. L. Todd studied at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, and after significant foreign work in tropical diseases, returned to Quebec as a parasitologist in the McGill Medical Faculty. There he worked on parasitic diseases of humans and domestic animals. Veterinary medicine influenced S. Hadwen, who, not being a physician, was steered away from tropical medicine and studied parasitic arthropods and vector borne diseases. Dr. Fallis describes how the development of veterinary parasitology was linked with that of entomology in Canada and the USA.

In spite of the depressed economics of the 1920's and 30's, the development of institutions by business and government had profound effects on the expansion of parasitology as a science (Chapter 4). One has the impression that the economic and medical importance of these organisms was being fully appreciated. The Institute of Parasitology at MacDonal College, with T. W. Cameron as its influential director, came into being as did the

Ontario Research Foundation and its significant investment in the study of wildlife parasites. Fallis documents clearly that, in addition to contributing to basic knowledge, these institutions played a pivotal role in the production of graduates (MSc and PhD) that colonized the rest of the country and established their own laboratories.

Much of the remainder of the book (Chapters 5 and 6) describes the career paths of these individuals and their students. In reading this section, parasitologists trained in Canada are provided with an outline of their academic pedigree. In his "...Golden Era..." one relates to the enthusiasm experienced at completing a parasite life cycle under field conditions. One senses from Fallis's description of this period in our history that, while historians may analyze the growth of parasitology in terms of economic and social relevancy, the personal reward of discovering marvels of adaptation and life histories of parasites has played a principal role in the discipline's growth.

"Parasites, People and Progress" is a book that will be enjoyed by parasitologists everywhere. It will undoubtedly serve as an important reference point for future historical studies in the discipline.

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