

## Book Review

Hermann Prinz's *Dental Chronology*.

Dr. Prinz's book attempts to give in chronological order all the important events of dental history from the very earliest times to the present. This work, as its author states in his preface, is intended merely as a chronology and not as a history of dentistry. Consequently it would be unfair to consider it from any other point of view. But it must be pointed out that its usefulness is determined by its being a chronology, for it must have the advantages and disadvantages of that form. If the author did not wish to write a connected history, he might have done better, it would seem to the reviewer, to make a topical dictionary of historical material alphabetically arranged. The seeker after knowledge seldom wishes to learn what happened at a certain time, but, usually, when something occurred.

Any chronology which does not arise spontaneously, like a chronicle or a diary recording events at the time they happen, runs into certain problems. Many things can be ascribed to no one particular year, and sometimes they cannot be dated by a definite beginning and end. Dr. Prinz has endeavored to place the careers of several distinguished dentists in his chronology. He has chosen to place these men by the year of their birth, a procedure which often distorts the time sequence and perspective. Dr. G. V. Black is an example. His career, located under the year of his birth, 1836, places his whole contribution to dentistry before the establishment of the first dental school, before Wells' discovery of nitrous oxide anesthesia, before the introduction of cohesive gold foil, and before many other events which long preceded his work. In most instances, the date of death would have been more appropriate as a means of locating a man, but perhaps best of all would have been to choose a date when some of his most significant work was accomplished. Dr. Black made no contribution of importance to dentistry up to 1869, and his most significant period was between 1890 and 1900.

Although there are some errors, wrong dates, and anachronisms, most of the specific dates can be relied upon. A book of this kind cannot be used successfully as a text for a course in the history of dentistry, but it will probably prove useful as a reference work.