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EDITOR'S CHOICE

BMJ

The past, like the poor, is always with us, and nowhere more so at the moment than in France. As the 200th anniversary of the storming of the Bastille approaches there is not a bed to be had in Paris. Those who would like to join in the celebrations but who cannot face commuting from Rouen should read John Gabbay's account of how "the French revolution totally reshaped medicine" (p 106). Without the reshaping we might not have had *Gray's Anatomy*, which has just entered its 37th edition. It was published for the first time 131 years ago, and the latest edition has almost 1600 pages and 5500 references; reviewing it on p 134, Bernard Dixon describes it as "a magnificent dossier of

biomedical knowledge, imagery, cartography, and ideas." Bodies were, of course, essential to anatomists, and the *BMJ* of 100 years ago reported how one poor man in Dublin went to the workhouse to claim the body of his mother only to discover that she had been removed to the medical school as unclaimed (p 97). He got her back. The last thing that Hawley Crippen wanted was to get his wife's body back after he had murdered her, but, as Louis Appleby explains (p 132), he was an unaccomplished murderer. Still, his endeavour made it into George Orwell's nine classic murders along with those by two other doctors. It's always encouraging to see the profession performing so well.