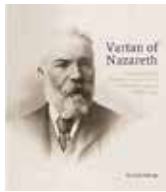


## Book Case

Dr Shane McKee reviews 6 favourites

### VARTAN OF NAZARETH

**Malcolm Billings,  
Paul Holberton  
Publishing 2012**



When I was a medical student in 1993, my overseas elective was in Nazareth Hospital in The Galilee, then run by the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society (EMMS). It's the oldest continually functioning hospital in Israel, and has come a long way since 1861. Malcolm Billings' book tells the story of the Armenian tailor's son from Ottoman Constantinople who trained in Medicine in Edinburgh and, after service in the Crimean War, set up the only healthcare facility between Beirut and Jerusalem. It wasn't easy for Dr Pacradooni Kaloost Vartan and his Scottish wife Anna. Disputes with the Ottoman authorities as well as illness in the family (5 of their 10 children died) and lack of resources almost snuffed out the fledgling clinic, but through a succession of skilled directors and amid huge geopolitical turmoil, the hospital survived. Today, it is a modern (though under-resourced) facility serving much of Northern Israel – Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Druze. In November 2016, I will be returning for my second cycle ride in the region, this time to raise money for the Paediatric Unit: <http://justgiving.com/shanenaz2016>. At the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2012, I was privileged to meet the current generation of the Vartan family, many of whom had come over from Nazareth before. This is an inspiring book, lifting back the veil on 19<sup>th</sup> Century medical practice in Palestine and the people of this incredible little Arab Israeli city.

### ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MEDICINE

**John Nunn, British  
Museum Press, 1997.**



In 2016 we think we

are so sophisticated, with our fancy medical diagnostics and operations. Yet we're building on a heritage that goes back before the ancient Greeks. Hippocrates credited much of his medical understanding to his Egyptian forebears. I first came across John Nunn's incredible book on a trip to Egypt in 2000. I became so fascinated with the topic that I took a 4 year Certificate in Egyptology, my dissertation being "The Medical Care of Children in Ancient Egypt". Nunn's book covers an impressively wide range of diseases and what the Egyptians thought of them, and of human physiology. He includes partial translations of some the medical papyri, which show that Egyptian *swnw* (doctors) invented the S.O.A.P. (Subjective, Objective, Assessment, Plan) structure long before we did, as well as many treatments that retain validity today. We stand on the shoulders of giant mummies.

### OUR MATHEMATICAL UNIVERSE

**Max Tegmark,  
Penguin 2015**



We also live in an extraordinary Universe, larger and more complex than we ever knew before we developed Science. Yet one observation may be the most puzzling and the most profound of all. Mathematics seems to do a spectacularly good job of describing how things actually work. Moreover, the mathematical models that appear to best describe our universe imply the existence of countless other universes in an almost limitless Multiverse. And if that's not enough, the fundamental nature of this Multiverse may actually be Mathematics itself. This book unpacks these brain-melting ideas in an accessible and entertaining form, including possibly the best explanation of the physics of the Big Bang that I have ever read. The central idea in particular – that everything is Mathematics – represents a theory that is breathing new life into ideas that go back to Plato, although with a sizeable quantum twist.

### THE PLAYER OF GAMES

**Iain M Banks, Orbit  
1989**



And speaking of universes and twists, the late (and hugely lamented) Iain M Banks was a Grand Master of this board with his sassy, engrossing, disturbing and thought-provoking series of science fiction novels based around The Culture. It is the distant future, and the Galaxy is ruled by competing civilisations with very different agendas and outlooks. Sentient spaceships, some carrying millions of people, flit in and out of hyperspace between star systems. Colossal orbitals, far larger than mere planets, retain artificial continents and oceans by centrifugal force. Humanoids and robot droids are often unwitting pawns in larger galactic games. And they do enjoy their games. Jernau Morat Gurgeh, greatest Game Player in the Galaxy (human anyway) is sent to play a high stakes game that will decide the future of an interstellar empire. But who is the player and who is being played? Banks aficionados may regard The Player Of Games as an odd choice, but its wry wit makes it my favourite of the Culture novels.

### 101 THINGS TO DO IN A SHED

**Rob Beattie, Ebury  
Press, 2005**



Coming back down to Earth, when I feel that Clinical Genetics doesn't let me exercise my practical side as much as I'd like, I can always head out to the garage and hammer a nail into something. It's a form of therapy. If I run out of ideas, I have "101 Things To Do In A Shed" By Rob Beattie to provide inspiration and advice. My grandfather made many of our toys when we were wee – so much so that as a kid I was convinced that he was one of Santa's elves. It's good to know that this spirit lives on amongst the Makers. Wooden games, models, science experiments, tools and techniques – this is a great little compendium for helping adults reconnect with their inner child,



and hopefully pass some hands-on skills and enthusiasm on to real children in the next generation.

**CHICKENS: THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CHOOSING AND KEEPING HAPPY, HEALTHY HENS.**

**Susie Baldwin, Kyle Books 2012**

Stepping out of the shed and away from one form of therapy, I can turn to another. Chickens are amazing creatures, and give back so much more than they take. Provide them with food, water and shelter, and you get compost-generation, entertainment, companionship in the garden, and of course something that recycles leftover scraps into eggs. In “Chickens”, Suzie Baldwin tells you pretty much everything you need to know about how to look after these remarkably low-maintenance feathered friends. And



even if you don't like eggs, someone you know is bound to. There's nothing that says "howdy neighbour" like half-a-dozen fresh free-range eggs from

happy chickens. After all, promoting good physical and mental health is what we're supposed to be about.



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