

## Book Reviews

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## INSTITUTE OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE, VALENCIA

A NEW Institute of the History of Medicine has been established in Valencia under the direction of Professor J. M. López Piñero. Professor López Piñero, who was formerly connected with the Institute of the History of Medicine at Salamanca, has published a number of important works on Spanish medicine. The new Institute, which is housed in the Institución 'Alfonso el Magnánimo', will be publishing a new journal entitled *Cuadernos Valencianos de Historia de la Medicina*, as well as a collection of medical classics in Spanish. The first numbers of the journal and the medical classics are in the Press.

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*Registerband zu Sudhoffs Paracelsus-Gesamtausgabe bearbeitet von Martin Müller. Nova Acta Paracelsica Supplementum 1960. Distributed by Karger Libri A. G., Basel, pp. 281, XII. S.Fr.60.*

Is Paracelsus (1493-1541) really a medical classic and ought we to read him? The safest way to decide this question is to survey his real contributions to the progress of medicine. This is by no means an easy task, as they have to be extracted from a

## Book Reviews

vast *Corpus* of treatises that deal with many things other than medicine. Moreover, throughout the ages, much has been added through the imagination of his admirers and much omitted or misinterpreted through the hostility of his detractors. It seems as if the survey has to be revised or renewed every half-century or even more often. At a conservative estimate a *short list of Paracelsus' contributions to the development towards modern medicine* should include the following items: (1) Paracelsus devoted much labour to the study of the *Miners' Disease* and was the first to present it as an occupational illness (1533–4)—an achievement marred only by the fact that his treatise first appeared long after his death (1567) and minor productions were allowed to hold the field until then. (2) Paracelsus' original and advanced clinical descriptions of the *protean manifestations of Syphilis*—then a new disease and believed to be single in type and appearance. Paracelsus identified congenital syphilis, rejected guaiac as well as heroic treatment with mercury and recognized the latter as the true curative agent *qua metal*. (3) Knowledge of the *diuretic action of mercury* and its effect in *dropsy*. (4) The connection of *goitre* with *minerals* and *drinking water*. (5) The advanced study of *mineral waters* which though not really supplemented by chemical analysis led to anticipation of *geological knowledge*. (6) The recognition of *exogenous agents* in *disease* and of the *local anatomical changes* resulting from their action. Paracelsus thus foreshadowed modern aetiology and morbid anatomy and prepared the *view of classifiable diseases*, each with a *specific cure*. (7) The preparation and use of *new chemical remedies* such as tartar *emetic* and of *ether*—the latter being *experimentally tested* in chickens and recommended as a *soothing agent* in *fits*, notably in *epileptic fits*. (8) Paracelsus devised *methods for the detoxication of chemical remedies* achieving for example the conversion of sulphides into sulphates by heating with saltpetre. (9) The launching of *Iatro-Chemistry*, as successfully taken up by the Paracelsists and emerging in the first *London Pharmacopoea* of 1618. (10) Demonstration of the *precipitation of protein* by means of *acid*. (11) The recognition of *acid in the stomach* of certain animals and at certain times and the praise given to *acid mineral waters* as appetizers and regulators of metabolism. (12) The recognition of the *Healing Power of Nature* causing Paracelsus to preach and practise *antiseptic principles*. If we add to this list the many brilliant aphorisms that he put forward in a new refreshing language and style we will indeed feel stimulated to read Paracelsus. There, however, we are confronted with new difficulties which seem insurmountable: there are fourteen volumes of Paracelsus in Sudhoff's edition—closely printed in Gothic script—or, if obtainable, two Elephant Folios in Huser's Omnibus edition and ten of them in the Huser Quarto. What we have in English translation is but a small sector of the actual works and inadequate in many respects. However, it is here that the book under notice offers us a sure way out of the difficulties. At last an *Index* has been prepared to the Sudhoff edition and the Herculean task has been admirably performed by the late Martin Müller (1878–1960) of Munich University in face of the tremendous war and post-war time risks. Through the offices of the Swiss Paracelsus Society and with the editorial help of Professor Robert Blaser, a Paracelsus Scholar of long standing and high merit, the publication of this invaluable work has at last become a reality. It is well produced and with its thousands of entries essentially correct, complete and reliable, although here and there a few entries are not verifiable or slips have occurred, which a new edition will easily eliminate. Nobody who wishes to do better than to rely on mere second-hand knowledge or the use of popular anthologies will be able to do without Martin Müller's Paracelsus Index.

WALTER PAGEL