

## Book Reviews

exclaimed: "What a strange allegorical Hyberno-flumiflammant Head Oken must have!", elsewhere awarding him marks:

Oken	= 7 1/2
Genius	= 2 1/2
Talent	= 4 1/2
Sense	= 0 1/2
<hr/>	
	7 1/2

However tempted we may be to exclaim over Coleridge's head, it is still unwise to sum up his mind.

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W. F. BYNUM, E. J. BROWNE and R. PORTER (editors), *Dictionary of the history of science*, London, Macmillan, 1981, 8vo, pp. xxxiv, 494, £17.50.

Dictionaries come in two sizes. Giant-sized dictionaries, such as *The dictionary of scientific biography* or the *Encyclopedia of philosophy*, contain detailed articles, the best of which overflow with erudition, sparkle with originality, and provide enough bibliographical information to satisfy the *cognoscente*. On the other hand, economy-sized dictionaries, like T. I. Williams (editor), *A biographical dictionary of scientists*, give only sufficient detail to answer the most basic questions, to whet the appetite, and to indicate further readings. This recently-published *Dictionary of the history of science* falls in the latter category. Some seven hundred articles concerning leading ideas in the history of science – ranging from "abduction" and the "aberration of light" to "Zilsel[']s] thesis" and "zoology" – are contained within a span of four hundred and fifty pages. The topics are concerned principally with the history of science (with comparatively few on clinical medicine or technology) but there are also many entries relating to the philosophy, sociology, and historiography of science. The value of the *Dictionary* is greatly increased by copious cross-references. Moreover, users confronting specific problems will also appreciate the general bibliography provided at the front of the work and the index of scientists' names at the end.

In general, the articles, which have been written by a panel of specialists, are succinct, although necessarily brief, and most are readily accessible to the non-specialist. Under a typical entry one can find discussion of the scientists who principally contributed to that subject, an outline of its development, its connexion with other topics, and, finally, bibliographical references to enable the reader to explore the subject further. On the last of these issues the user may be somewhat disappointed, since all too many entries contain inadequate bibliographies. Major topics, such as "natural theology", "structuralism", and "geology" do not merit any bibliographical reference, while "psychoanalysis" receives but a single entry. By contrast, the article "sociology of (scientific) knowledge" is graced by no fewer than thirty-four references, most of which are not core readings in that subject.

One way of assessing a dictionary of this type is to test it in the field, as it were. When the book reached this reviewer he was engaged in preparing a lecture on nineteenth-century electromagnetism. He was surprised that there was no entry under either "Maxwell's equations" or "electromagnetism", although "electromagnetic induction" produced a cross-reference to a five-column article on "electricity and magnetism" which summarized in two paragraphs Maxwell's contributions to the subject and produced two germane references. Subsequent trials on other topics have shown the very variable standards achieved in this volume. Some relatively obscure topics, such as "gravity outside the solar system", merit inclusion and there is a notable partiality in many of the articles on historiographical issues.

Historians of science will turn to this volume principally for introductions to unfamiliar territory – as such they will find it a useful addition to their bookshelves. Moreover, as a contribution to the reference works on our subject this *Dictionary* should be of assistance to

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students and others if made available through college libraries. Publication of this work also highlights the need for a giant-sized historical dictionary of scientific ideas.

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S. E. D. SHORTT (editor), *Medicine in Canadian society. Historical perspectives*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. xiii, 506, \$23.95 (\$11.95 paperback).

The history of Canadian medicine, like other varieties of Canadian history until quite recently, has suffered from an abiding conviction that "history is about chaps" and from primitive research techniques. To these disabilities has been added, in the case of Canadian medical history, the circumstance that, as in other English-speaking countries, the discipline was for long the pastime of practitioners, frequently elderly, who were unversed in the ways of history. Though a succession of distinguished Canadian medical scholars, beginning with Osler, contributed significantly to the historiography of medicine, the history of *Canadian* medicine is yet a long way from producing great historical scholars in the tradition of Sudhoff, Sigerist, Temkin, O'Malley, and Pagel.

But in the last few years non-medical historians have been writing informatively, if not profoundly, about Canadian medical topics, as the very interesting collection of articles published in *Medicine in Canadian society* makes evident. Most of the eighteen papers are either institutional studies (health care of the indigent in Nova Scotia, psychiatric care in the Maritimes, medical licensure in Quebec, early history of the profession on the Prairies, comparison of Canadian and American medical institutions, medical attendance in Vancouver); public policy studies (public health in the schools of Ontario and British Columbia, public health in Montreal, public health insurance before 1945); socio-intellectual studies (women doctors and feminism, American sex manuals at the beginning of the century, birth control before 1920, the resistance of Ontario doctors to Ernest Jones and Freudianism); and general descriptions of epidemics (epidemics among Western Indians in the early nineteenth century, cholera in the same years, and the influenza epidemic of 1918–19 in Canada). It will be seen that these may all be subsumed under what the editor of the collection has called "the social history of medicine" and what Leonard Wilson has called "the history of medicine without medicine".

In general, these are competently researched and well written. Several (those on the Maritimes and the influenza epidemic, notably) display regrettable parochial ignorance of the larger setting of their respective topics. Others appear to be extrapolations of American themes to Canada, displaying little interest in examining the interaction of distinctively Canadian institutions and values with the phenomena under discussion. As too frequently happens in studies that purport to be of Canada-wide scope, there is also a tendency on the part of several authors to read "Ontario" and even "Toronto" for "Canada". Medical topics by and about the French Canadian part of Canada have been largely, though not quite entirely, ignored by the editor.

Only three of the contributors, in fact, have medical training, and only two of the eighteen papers concern clinical subjects. One of these, Robert Fortuine's 'The health of the Eskimos as portrayed in the earliest written accounts' (from the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*) is quite the best in the whole collection, providing an original, highly skilled, and suitably cautious analysis of the early accounts of Eskimo health.

The editor's introductory essay, 'Antiquarians and amateurs', provides a useful survey, both of the shortcomings of the history of Canadian medicine, and of what ought to be pursued in the future. Like many historians of medicine who have recently discovered social history, he is inclined to exaggerate the importance of the discovery and to deplore, without much understanding, the preference of medical practitioners for historical accounts of clinicians struggling to effect great (or small) medical improvements. Surely the preference is understandable; naturally the clinician will identify with his mirror image. Surely, too, the history of medicine, in Canada and elsewhere, is in urgent need of good histories of clinical medicine – of what doctors do – which is being lost sight of in the battle of the books between supporters of