

Book Reviews

available for all at a modest price. The New York Academy of Medicine is to be congratulated on reproducing this work through its Library Publications Committee, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Bronsen S. Ray, in paperback edition; and it is much to be hoped that still further classics of the medical literature of times past will in due course also appear in this handy form.

W. S. C. COPEMAN

A Short History of the Royal Society Club of Edinburgh, 1820 to 1962, by DOUGLAS GUTHRIE, Edinburgh, published privately for the Royal Society Club, 1963, pp. 40, illus., 10s. (obtainable from the Secretary, Royal Society of Edinburgh, 22 George Street, Edinburgh).

The Royal Society of Edinburgh was founded in 1783, and in 1820 there was established a dining club of limited membership, 'with the view of promoting the objects of the Royal Society'.

The Minutes of the Club constitute an interesting record, and the Club has now printed privately some account of the 662 meetings which have been held up to the present time when it is flourishing as vigorously as ever. The story of this important adjunct to the Royal Society has been written by Dr. Douglas Guthrie, who has for many years been a Fellow of the Society and a member of the Club. He has been curator of the library and museum, and later, a vice-president of the Society.

He refers to the earliest days of the Club, when Sir Walter Scott was the third President of the Society, at a time when there were two classes of Fellows (then called Members). The two categories were Physical and Literary, and Sir Walter was the only 'Literary' President. The literary class came to an end last century, but the tradition is preserved to this day by the election of a very small minority of Fellows not directly engaged in scientific work. Among other noteworthy figures closely linked with the Society, and the Club, were Sir David Brewster, Sir T. Macdougall-Brisbane, who succeeded Sir Walter Scott as President, and gave his name to the Australian city, Sir Archibald Geikie, Lord Kelvin, Baron Playfair of St. Andrews and Sir D'Arcy Thompson.

The Royal Society of Edinburgh was at first closely connected with medicine as well as science, and the Club was warmly supported by Sir Robert Christison and Sir Douglas Maclagan, who were in great demand at the dinners as singers of their own verses, alone or as a duet. Other medical contributors to many a lively evening were Professor Crum Brown, the brother of 'Rab', Dr. George Gibson and Dr. Alexander Bruce.

In recent years there was Sir Robert Muir who in his eighty-ninth year, in 1953, attended a dinner at which he told the story of a salmon which had jumped unaided into his boat on a Highland loch. Many a dinner was enlivened by the presence of Professor John Stuart Blackie, who, it was said, taught various subjects at the University, including a little Greek, of which he was Professor. Another performer was Lord Neaves, a noted judge and wit of last century, who sang songs of his own composition.

Early Secretaries of the Club who held office in turn were Henry Stephens, an authority on Agriculture whose classic work, *The Book of the Farm*, had an immense circulation, Dr. Alexander Buchan the meteorologist and Professor R. A. Sampson, who was Astronomer-Royal for Scotland.

The little book gives a fascinating picture of a bygone age, and an insight into the lighter moments of scientific endeavour during the reign of Queen Victoria.