

## Book Notices

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RONALD HOLMES, *Witchcraft in British history*, London, Frederick Muller, 1974, 8vo., pp. 272, illus., £5.50.

Books on witchcraft are either written for the layman and therefore pander to his fascination for the occult, or they are scholarly studies investigating a fascinating phenomenon, as yet incompletely explored or accounted for. Many more of the latter are needed, but this book belongs to the former type. It is a competent and well-written account in which extensive editing, especially of quotations provides "... the present-day reader with a text which can be read easily and rapidly . . . ." (p. 5). There is nothing new here, and unfortunately there is no documentation whatever. A very inadequate list of books for "suggested reading" makes no reference to the important studies by Keith Thomas, Macfarlane and Trevor-Roper, although the last of these is mentioned in the introduction.

The author attempts to discuss the interaction between witchcraft beliefs and religious, political and social factors, and to do so he identifies three types of witches: the "folk-witch" or "white witch" or herb woman who as well as treating illnesses could produce them; the "political-witch" who used the latter ability to attain political power; the "heretic-witch", an evil person who actively opposed current religious beliefs. The author traces the evolution of these types from early to twentieth-century Britain. The influence upon history has been considerable because those employing religious, political and social forces in their quest for power used witchcraft as a tool against a gullible and fear-ridden populace. Thus during the Great Rebellion the political- and heretic-witch, or a compound of the two, predominated; and, as in other periods, the evil influence, rather than always emanating from the witch, was usually projected upon her.

As an introduction for those proceeding to deeper studies this book can be recommended, but opinions expressed must be checked against those of the experts, and the whereabouts of sources sought elsewhere.

ERNA LESKY (editor), *Wien und die Weltmedizin*, Vienna, H. Böhlau, 1974, 8vo., pp. 242, illus., DM.68.

The twenty papers read at a meeting of the International Academy of the History of Medicine held in Vienna 17–19 September 1973 are here presented. They are in German (9), English (6), and French (5) and cover a wide area, dealing mainly with the influence of Viennese medicine and certain of its individual practitioners on medicine in other countries. As is usual in such a collection, the quality is uneven, but all papers are well documented and the majority are useful contributions. It seems strange, however, that despite the international character of the Academy, associations only with European countries were considered.

W. R. ACKROYD, *The conquest of famine*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1974, 8vo., pp. 4 ll., 216, illus., £5.00.

Famine is a long-drawn-out calamity afflicting large numbers of people. The author, a distinguished nutritionalist, deals mainly with the problem in Eastern countries during the last few decades. This he precedes with accounts of famine in history, from the time of the Ancient Egyptians; he includes Ireland, India, China,

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Russia, and elsewhere. Although control of famine has improved considerably since World War II and the author is optimistic about local outbreaks, the world food situation remains precarious. The main factor here is excessive population and more vigorous efforts to check it are urgently needed.

Dr. Aykroyd's book is an excellent and accurate appraisal of the present situation untrammelled by political and chauvinistic distortions. From the point of view of medical history, famine is seen as a traditional enemy of man, and this is one of the few recommendable and up-to-date treatises on it.

MICHAEL ANDERSON, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1974, 8vo., pp. ix, 230, £2.75 paperback (also in hard covers).

The more we know of the structure of society the more we shall be able to assess the effects of diseases on it and the attempts to prevent and treat them. The social background against which we set out historical researches must be as detailed as possible, and no aspect of human existence is without relevance. Medical historians should, therefore, be aware of this sociological study of the effects on working-class kinship brought about by the industrialization of nineteenth-century Lancashire, and of Preston, 1830 to 1865, in particular. The first edition appeared in 1971 and it was highly praised; reviews are to be found in *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 July 1972, p. 894; *The Economist*, 9 December 1972, 245: 61; *English Historical Review*, 1973, 88: 654; *History (J. Hist. Assoc.)*, 1972, 57: 444.

Parts of this book are difficult to comprehend because of the technical nature of the material, the compactness of the arguments, and the jargon of sociology. However, although the author is dealing with a small sample, there are wider implications, important for the sociology of the family and the social history of the nineteenth century.

RICHARD H. MEADE, *In the sunshine of life. A biography of Dr. Richard Mead 1673–1754*, Philadelphia, Dorrance, 1974, pp. xii, 196, illus., \$7.95.

Despite the fact that Mead was one of the most outstanding British physicians of the eighteenth century a full-scale biography has not, before now, been attempted. One of the reasons is that apart from a few unexciting letters there seems to be no primary biographical material available. The author has, therefore, done his best to assemble the secondary literature and to analyse Mead's writings, although he does not seem to have used the English translation of Maty's *Authentic memoirs* (London, 1755), which is the only extensive obituary of Mead. Unfortunately Dr. Meade accepts uncritically information and opinions from unreliable sources without checking, and on occasions cites more than one author's testimony without adjudicating. The eighteenth-century medical background is scant and the author's ignorance of certain aspects of it is occasionally revealed. There is considerable repetition due perhaps to faulty integration of a study carried on over a lengthy period of time.

Nevertheless, the material used is well documented, and as a useful compilation of the available sources on Mead the book can be recommended. There is an excellent index, but the dust jacket displays a spelling mistake in the title.

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ROBERT H. KARGON (editor), *The maturing of American science*, Washington, D.C., American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1974, 4to., pp. ii [257], illus., [no price stated].

The American Association for the Advancement of Science, or the Triple A-S as it is affectionately named, is equivalent to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, or the British Ass., as it is called, with equal affection. Its purposes are to advance the work of scientists and co-operation between them, to improve the effectiveness of science in the promotion of human affairs, and to increase public understanding of it. First organized in 1848, it holds an annual jamboree, during which, as with the British Ass., the president delivers an official address. Dr. Kargon, Associate Professor of the History of Science at Johns Hopkins University, has had the excellent idea of bringing a selection of these speeches together and using them as a measure of the advancement, and coincidentally, the maturing of American science, 1923–1970. Mostly they are exquisitely sensitive to their own times, and thus provide both the student of history and the general reader with most valuable contemporary documents. Each is reproduced in full, with a brief biographical introduction, and each presents “a portrait of science in public life” (subtitle). The life sciences are represented by McMurrich, Cattell, Conklin, Sears and Bentley Glass.

The period selected shows in particular the interactions between science and society, and the editor introduces each of four sections with perceptive essays. Most important are governmental and political influences ranging from McCarthyism to defence budgets, but ecology, humanism, technology, science policy, ethics, and other fundamental issues are also dealt with.

As well as each address being a valuable source for the historian of science, together they show how American scientific tradition has evolved and been accepted. Perhaps some one will do the same for the presidential addresses to the British Ass., many of which are languishing in undeserved obscurity.

MORRIS GORAN, *Science and anti-science*, Ann Arbor, Mich., Ann Arbor Science Publishers, 1974, 8vo., pp. xi, 128, £4.50.

The author is writing for both scientist and non-scientist in an attempt to reveal the conflicts, myths, surprises and misleadings in modern science. By so doing he hopes to hold up a mirror to the scientist so that he may see himself objectively, but at the same time reveal him to the world at large. Each section is brief but purposeful and is illustrated by an abundance of references to pertinent information, much of it historical. By this method, topics that are often rendered obscure and dull by philosophers are presented with a clarity that enhances the author's message. It also allows those who have difficulty manipulating theoretical concepts to comprehend and remember some of the more vital issues confronting science today.

ROBERT REID, *Microbes and men*, London, British Broadcasting Corporation, London, 1974, 8vo., pp. 170, illus., £2.50.

A competent, well-written account for the layman of the usual highlights in the history of microbiology to accompany a television serial of the same title.

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NANCY G. SIRAIISI, *Arts and sciences at Padua. The "studium" of Padua before 1350*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973, 8vo., pp. 199, \$10.25.

Padua as a centre of Aristotelianism, astronomy and medicine was at the height of its fame in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as testified by the prominence of men such as Copernicus, Vesalius, Pomponazzi, Galileo and Harvey who were associated with it. The period from its inception in 1222 to 1350 is, however, less well known. This scholarly work looks into the early history of the subjects taught, including medicine and surgery (pp. 143–171), how they were established and their content. The close association between medicine and the liberal arts and natural philosophy is especially noteworthy, a situation that did not exist in the contemporary universities of northern Europe. Much of the book deals with this problem, and altogether it is an important contribution to the history of medical education, especially as regards the curriculum used in the Paduan Faculty of Arts and Medicine. The subjects taught were grammar, rhetoric, Latin, logic, the mathematical arts (arithmetic, geometry, astrology and music), *scientia naturalis et metaphisica*, and the practice and theory of medicine. The links with the arts and with astrology are of particular significance.

As well as local documents, the author has surveyed the writings of men who were at Padua before 1350, and the contemporary Latin works studied there. Throughout, there is full documentation, with lists of Paduan teachers before 1350, and a full bibliography. Dr. Siraisi's book will be of interest to all those studying medieval and renaissance medicine and science, but especially to students of medical education. It deserves a wide distribution.

W. SMELLIE, *A treatise on the theory of midwifery* (London, D. Wilson, 1752), reprint, London, Baillière Tindall, and New York, R. E. Krieger, 1974, 8vo., pp. xiv, lxxii, 454, [ix], \$27.50.

On the occasion of the Twentieth British Congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology held in London, July 1974, this elegant facsimile reprint of Smellie's classic work on the obstetric art (G.M.6154) was produced. As the original is now difficult to come by and is increasingly expensive, a reproduction will be welcomed by those interested in eighteenth-century obstetrics and in Smellie's pioneer work on the mechanism of parturition and the use of forceps. He included a brief historical introduction, and although there are many errors as regards individuals, the accounts of their writings are accurate enough.

ULRICH TRÖHLER, *Der Schweitzer Chirurg J. F. de Quervain (1868–1940)*, Aarau, Sauerländer A. G., 1973, 8vo., pp. x, 137, illus., S.Fr.24.

Dr. Tröhler's M.D. thesis first deals with the career of de Quervain who was professor of surgery first at Basle and then at Berne, where he succeeded Kocher. His name is occasionally associated with tenosynovitis of the abductor pollicis longus and the extensor pollicis brevis tendons (1895), and with a form of thyroiditis (1902), possibly of viral origin. He was one of the last outstanding, general surgeons and his textbook on diagnosis became a classic in several languages. The second section

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considers de Quervain's mediating role in re-uniting the International Society of Surgery after World War I, and here the author uses hitherto unpublished correspondence. Documentation throughout is exemplary, for there are hind notes and a list of very brief biographies of persons referred to. This book is a useful contribution to the history of twentieth-century surgery, not only concerning its practice, but also its international relationships, a topic that has not before now been subjected to detailed study.

JAMES WHORTON, *Before "Silent Spring". Pesticides and public health in pre-DDT America*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1974, 8vo., pp. xv, 289, \$12.50.

The late Ruth Carson's classic work on the pollution of humans and animals by pesticides, *Silent spring*, was published in 1962, and ever since there has been an increasing interest in, and concern about, the dilemma ". . . of seemingly having to poison our food in order to protect it. . . ." (pp. vii-viii). The author is concerned here with the BC (Before Carson) period, when there was less concern with the insecticide hazard. He traces the history of food regulations in the U.S.A. and shows that contamination of food with chemical insecticides has been a problem ever since their introduction in 1860. There were social, economic and technological, as well as scientific, factors involved. The agricultural and medical literature of the last one hundred years is first reviewed and it is shown that a serious public health hazard emerged by 1920. Inefficient handling of it has led to present-day pollution abuses, and this book will be of value to those assessing them.

HENRY M. LEICESTER, *Development of biochemical concepts from ancient to modern times*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1974, 8vo., pp. [vii], 286, £7.50.

The author defines biochemical concepts as ". . . any hypotheses of bodily function which involve specific substances . . ." and can thereby discuss material that most historians would not claim to be biochemical. Thus the title "Biochemical concepts in Classical Greece" seems especially incongruous. In fact this chapter deals mainly with general, non-biochemical biological and medical thought. The statement that "One of the major reasons why Greeks thought along biochemical lines was that they were greatly interested in biological phenomena . . ." (p.6) does not seem to make sense, and certainly does not increase our confidence in the author as an historian. Chinese, Indian, Arabic, medieval and renaissance "biochemistry" are considered in much the same vein, but perhaps "alchemy" would have been a better term for it. From the seventeenth century onwards, chemistry without doubt began to play an important role in medicine. The nineteenth century, leading into the twentieth, introduces biochemistry as we know it, strongly influenced by the parallel advancement of organic chemistry. Eight chapters are devoted to this period, bringing the story up to the 1930s; molecular biology has three pages.

By accepting a very wide interpretation of "biochemistry" the author has been able to include a lot of material not relevant to the history of this science. Perhaps the easiest solution would be to change the book's title to *A history of biological and medical thought, with special reference to the role of chemistry*.

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G. A. LINDEBOOM, *Florentius Schuyl (1619–1669). Ein zijn betekenis voor het Cartesianisme in de geneeskunde*, The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 1974, 8vo., pp. xiv, 161, illus., D.Fl. 29.65.

A detailed study of the life and work of the Dutch botanist and physician, who is best known for his translation into Latin of Descartes' *L'homme* (1662). His main contribution to medicine was as a supporter of Descartes' physiology and Sylvius' medical theories, but he wrote on several other topics; a facsimile reprint (28 pp.) of his exceedingly rare *De veritate scientiarum et artium academicarum* (Leyden, 1672) is included here. There are no non-Dutch summaries.

PHYLLIS A. MORTIMER, (compiler), *Only when it hurts*, London, Wolfe Publishing, 1974, 8vo., pp. [viii], 118, illus., £2.50.

The sub-title declares that this strange little book is "A curious collection of old fashioned remedies and dissertations on matters of health and hygiene" and it is made up of extracts from thirty-one books (1621 to 1934, but twenty are from the nineteenth century). They lack any form of introduction or annotation and they seem to have been selected because, in the compiler's opinion, they ". . . will amuse, amaze, and sometimes even appal . . ." This irreverent and unhistorical attitude towards primary sources is hardly likely to be condoned by the historian, although in some instances he may discover extracts of value to his studies.

MARTIN SCHRENK, *Über den Umgang mit Geisteskranken*, Berlin, Springer-Verlag, 1973, 8vo., pp. ix, 194, illus., DM.98, \$44.10.

The author, a psychiatrist, is interested basically in the treatment of the insane in the mental hospital, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century. He begins by discussing the origins of German institutional psychiatry and points out that although J. C. Reil (1759–1813) is usually thought to be the main originator, the influence of P. Pinel (1745–1826) was greater. Both he and German physicians, however, were strongly affected by English practitioners and their "moral management", and by Scottish moral philosophy. The word *moral* creates problems because of the varying interpretations put upon it. It can imply "psychological", "humane", "decent", or "socially integrated". Treatment based on these concepts of benevolence and kindness is opposed by another type of moral therapy, in which education by punishment is used to alleviate the patient's immoral behaviour. The author includes several illustrations of the cruel and sadistic methods, in the form of medieval-like torture instruments, to which the patient was subjected. Another element in the institutional treatment of psychiatric patients is the psychological make-up of staff members. As the author points out, the director may range from an amiable patriarch to a punitive judge.

There is no discussion here of phrenology, which, certainly so far as British psychiatry is concerned, can be shown to have had a widespread influence on the development of the subject itself, and also an important effect on the treatment of the insane in the first half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Dr. Schrenk has produced an excellent and scholarly work, which would be well received in English translation, but only if the price could be lowered considerably.

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HANS ULRICH HOFER, *Die Arteriosklerose in der pathologischen Anatomie des 19. Jahrhunderts (Zürcher Medizingeschichtliche Abhandlungen, Neue Reihe Nr. 99)*, Zürich, Juris Druck, 1974, 8vo., pp. 98, S.Fr.20.

It is surprising that so little has been written on the history of arteriosclerosis, a universal pathological process which we know has afflicted man at least since the Ancient Egyptians. The term was coined by Lobstein in 1833 but accurate knowledge of its morphology had to await the development of microscopy, employed especially by Rokitansky (1852), the researches of Virchow on thrombosis and embolism, and the work of many other morbid anatomists. By the end of the century arteriosclerosis was a well-defined entity and there had been much conjecture concerning its etiology. In regard to the latter it should be noted that hypercholesterolemia had been postulated as early as 1845. It is also interesting to observe that most of this research came from Germany and Austria.

Dr. Hofer has produced an excellent survey of arteriosclerosis in the nineteenth century. His monograph is well researched and written and accurately documented; it thus follows the praiseworthy style now characteristic of the Zürich school of medical history.

OLA ELIZABETH WINSLOW, *A destroying angel. The conquest of smallpox in colonial Boston*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974, 8vo., pp. [xvi], 137, illus., \$5.95.

A competent account of the disease in New England, preceded by a description of the early medical practice and profession there, and centring on the devastating Boston epidemic of 1721. The story is well known, having been related on several occasions, and the use of inoculation (Cotton Mather and Zabdiel Boylston) and vaccination (Benjamin Waterhouse) has been adequately explored already. There are a few notes to each chapter and a brief bibliography, but concerning the latter it is curious that the author makes no reference to Blake's important *Benjamin Waterhouse and the introduction of vaccination. A reappraisal* (Philadelphia, 1957), although citing two of his papers. The earlier parts of the work are marred by some errors and inaccuracies (Galen's ebb and flow theory, his diagrams, Rhazes' book "in print"), and unhistorical judgments such as "fantastic . . . remedies". What is fantastic, from the point of view of a purist historian, is an illustration of Rhazes busy in his laboratory!

J. SNOWMAN, *A short history of Talmudic medicine*, New York, Hermon Press, 1974, 8vo., pp. 94, \$5.75.

In 1935 this book was published in London and it is now reprinted unchanged. It provides a brief but excellent survey of Hebrew medicine in the Talmudic era (about A.D. 200–600). Anatomy, physiology, disease causation and types, surgery, obstetrics, gynaecology, paediatrics, ophthalmology, diseases of ears, nose and teeth, skin lesions and comparative pathology are all dealt with, as well as the social status of the physician. The discussion of Biblical "leprosy" presents the modern view that this was an acute skin lesion and not Hansen's disease. There are no references, but for a rapid over-view of Talmudic medicine the late Dr. Snowman's book can be heartily recommended.

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*Quaderni per la Storia dell'Università di Padova*, Padua, Editrice Antenore, vol. 1 (1968) to vol. 6 (1973).

In October 1974 the sixth volume (for 1973) of the *Quaderni per la Storia dell'Università di Padova* was published. These annual volumes, consisting of two parts, are of interest to the medical historian. In the first part there are important essays on the history of the University of Padua, including medico-historical topics: for example, Giuseppe Ongaro, 'La biblioteca di Giambattista Morgagni' (*Quaderni*, 1970, 3: 113–129); Lucia Rossetti, 'Francesca Zen Benetti: nuove ricerche sull' anatomico fiammingo Adriaan van den Spieghel' (*Quaderni*, 1972, 5: 45–89); Pericle Di Pietro, 'Lo studio di Padova nelle lettere di Bernardino Ramazzini' (*Quaderni*, 1973, 6: 193–198). The second part consists of a current, commentated bibliography of the history of the University of Padua. Lucia Rossetti, Director of the University Archives in Padua, is the assistant editor of the *Quaderni*, which are published under the auspices of the Istituto per la Storia dell'Università di Padova.

HELMUT SIEFERT

O. MANNONI, *Freud. The theory of the unconscious*, London, NLB, 1971, pp. 207, £2.25.

The analyst is once again analysed. The author is a practising Parisian psychoanalyst of classical type, and the French original of his book appeared in 1968. In it he traces the evolution of Freud's crucial concepts, by means of which his work can be understood. The defects of the system are also noted so that a balanced survey is produced. Compared with other tedious treatises, Dr. Mannoni's is brief and readily readable. The last chapter considers psycho-analysis since Freud's death in 1939, and notes how it has fared in various countries; in England it seems, unlike the U.S.A. and France, that the future for pure Freudianism is not good. This comparative treatment is most valuable, for it indicates that psycho-analysis is by no means universally accepted.

YEHUDA ELKANA, *The discovery of the conservation of energy*, London, Hutchinson Educational, 1974, 8vo., pp. x, 213, £4.00.

Helmholtz's memoir of 1847 enunciated the principle of conservation of energy, and Dr. Elkana in this, his Ph.D. thesis, after tracing the emergence of the general concept of energy, then discusses in detail this formulation. He deals with Helmholtz's physiological background and then considers at great length other influences affecting him. However, these chapters on mechanics, heat, and philosophy, like that on physiology, achieve no synthesis and are poorly co-ordinated. Moreover, too much attention is paid to Helmholtz, and this lack of balance can be found elsewhere, for example, in the undeservedly lengthy section on Davy. On the whole there is an excessively large number of quotations in the text.

As well as discussing such particularities, the author also, and at times, confusedly, considers more general issues; he mostly expects the reader to have a certain amount of technical knowledge of the subject. Documentation leaves much to be desired and there are an unwarranted number of mis-spellings.

For those who are aware of such defects the book can be read with profit, for several unsolved problems are referred to, and others may be stimulated to tackle them.



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SIR HEDLEY ATKINS, *Down. The home of the Darwins. The story of a house and the people who lived there*, London, Royal College of Surgeons of England, 1974, 4to., pp. [viii], 131, illus., [no price stated].

Charles Darwin took possession of Down House in 1842 and, until the death of his widow Emma in 1896, it was the family home. Although books on Darwin and on his work are legion, this is the first full account of the house where his great contributions to biology were made. It is a history of the estate, from the earliest times to its present form as the Darwin Museum, under the auspices of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and due originally to the generosity of Sir George Buckston Browne. Well illustrated and attractively written, this book will be widely popular. Unfortunately documentation is, on the whole, inadequate and when, for example, manuscript material at Down House is cited the reference in each instance is, "DH. Manuscripts and other materials at Down House".

LESLIE CAINE CAMPBELL, *Two hundred years of pharmacy in Mississippi*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 1974, 8vo., pp. xv, 207, \$10.00.

The author is an intellectual and social historian and his book commemorates the formation of the Mississippi State Pharmaceutical Association in 1871. The periods from about 1771 to 1871 and from 1871 to 1900 occupy one-third of the book, the years 1900 to 1971 being dealt with in the remaining two-thirds. The first two parts are the most interesting, especially the lists of Indian drugs employed, some of which have recently been grown and their active principles determined. The more modern history concerns the emergence of professional pharmacy. The material is well documented and there is a full bibliography, but the coverage is wholly parochial. It will, however, remain a source-book on the topic with which it is concerned.

DAVID L. COWEN, *The spread and influence of British pharmacopoeial and related literature. An historical and bibliographical study*, Stuttgart, Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 1974 (*Veröffentlichungen der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Pharmacie e.V.*, Neue Folge, Band 41), 8vo., pp. xvii, 105, illus., DM.24.

Professor Cowen's excellent little study surveys the translations of British pharmacopoeias, formularies, dispensatories, conspectuses, etc., into foreign languages, and those published in English-reading countries. He can demonstrate how little the materia medica changed over the centuries, and how the world of learning can transcend national boundaries, even at time of war. He supports his well-documented discussion with listings of pharmacopoeias, etc., that were published abroad, with photographs of fourteen title-pages, and with a table which graphically presents his data, comprising no fewer than 266 entries.

DAVID ASCOLI, *A village in Chelsea. An informal account of the Royal Hospital*, London, W. Luscombe, 1974, 8vo., pp. 224, illus., £3.50.

Whereas Captain C. G. T. Dean's history of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea (London, 1950) was a solid, if somewhat dull, work of scholarship, the present book deals with the more human aspects of the hospital. It is a self-contained community,

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founded by King Charles II in 1681, built by Wren and opened in 1962, it has a colourful and fascinating history as revealed by its archives. Mr. Ascoli bases his excellent account on the latter, and as well as being a history of the Chelsea in-pensioner up to the present day, it is also a survey of the changing status of the regular soldier *per se*. There are several references to medical, surgical, psychiatric, and dietetic matters, but unfortunately the author gives no references and few annotations. The value of the book to those who may wish to pursue further its contents is thereby much reduced.

A. LANDBOROUGH THOMSON, *Half a century of medical research*, Volume I, *Origins and policy of the Medical Research Council (U.K.)*, London, H.M.S.O., 1973, 8vo., pp. xiv, 308, illus., £4.60.

The Medical Research Committee, which was established in 1913, became the Medical Research Council (M.R.C.) seven years later. Its history is being recorded in two volumes and this, the first, deals with the general history of the Council, in particular its constitutional and administrative aspects and the making of its policies. The origins of the Committee and the Council are described in detail, this section being entitled 'Origin and status (constitutional history)', and the second, 'Ways and means (organisation and administration)'. There are extensive appendices which record sources and references, legislature, royal charters, lists of responsible ministers and senior staff. Illustrations are numerous and excellent, depicting members of staff and the accommodation of the Council.

Sir Landsborough Thomson is the ideal person to compile this history because he joined the staff of the original Committee in 1919, and as second officer at the Council's headquarters for nearly forty years has been intimately involved with its development. He is to be congratulated on this well-written and most informative volume. We now look forward to the second volume which will deal with the scientific programme of the M.R.C. The completed work will, therefore, appeal to historians of the medical sciences and of their social relationships.

HUGH DOUGLAS, *Burke and Hare. The true story*, London, Robert Hale, 1973, 8vo., pp. 190, illus., £2.80.

The well-known tale of the Edinburgh murderers who, between 1827 and 1828, sold the bodies of their victims to Dr. Robert Knox, the anatomist, is recounted once more. A thorough search of contemporary newspapers, periodicals, court records, pamphlets, broadsheets, etc., and many secondary sources has been carried out, but unfortunately there is no precise documentation of those used. It seems a waste of effort to consult so many documents but make no records of them, except for scanty information concerning a few books and articles.

However, the work is as good as any so far produced on the subject and is very readable. The author describes well the early nineteenth-century Edinburgh background, although medical historians would challenge the dust-jacket statement that at this time, ". . . medicine was not quite respectable and its fringe downright criminal".

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DIETRICH BRANDENBURG, *Medizinisches in tausendundeiner Nacht*, Stuttgart, J. Fink Verlag, 1973, 8vo., pp. 79, DM.10.00.

*The Arabian Nights* is an excellent repository of information concerning medieval Islamic medicine and it is here analysed in detail by an expert. After an introduction, in which the significance of the tales in Arabic literature is discussed, and texts and translations are detailed, the author deals systematically with various aspects of medicine, including folk and astrological medicine. Full documentation is provided so that the book provides a useful reference source. It is vastly superior to its equivalent in English (F. A. Mettler, 'Medical references in *The Arabian Nights*', *Bull. Med. Lib. Assoc.*, 1956, 44: 348–359) which is based on Burton's translation of 1885–1888.

W. HOWARD HUGHES, *Alexander Fleming and penicillin*, London, Priory Press, 1974, 4to., pp. 96, illus., £2.25.

It is not entirely clear why yet another book on Fleming and penicillin for the layman was thought to be necessary. Admittedly this one is elegantly and copiously illustrated, but it is the same old panegyric, as would be expected from a colleague of Fleming and a St. Mary's man.

We still await an accurate and balanced account of the discovery, taking into account Chain's recent disclosures. Koch also receives much less than his due in a very brief early history of bacteriology. However, the earlier part of Fleming's career is well described, and throughout the book there are valuable comments based on the author's personal contacts and experiences, which are not found in other biographies.

### BOOKS ALSO RECEIVED

(The inclusion of a title in this list does not preclude the possibility of subsequent review.)

*Bibliography of the history of medicine*, no. 8 (1972), Bethesda, MD., National Library of Medicine, 1975, pp. vi, 309, \$4.40.

IVAN ILLICH, *Medical Nemesis. The expropriation of health*, London, Calder & Boyars, 1975, pp. 184, £1.50 (paperback).

*Nordisk Medicinhistorisk Årsbok*, 1974, pp. 203, illus. [no price stated].

IAN SUTHERLAND, 'When was the Great Plague? Mortality in London, 1563 to 1665', reprinted from D. V. Glass and R. Revelle (editors), *Population and social change*, London, Edward Arnold, 1972, pp. 287–320.

*Y Gwyddonydd*, 1975, vol. 13. In a supplement to this issue, on pp. vii–ix, there is a list of medical books published in Wales, 1740 to 1942.