

Book Reviews

Clearly, the uses and application of such a work are limited. One is tempted, therefore, to conclude that the author may have been better advised to have utilized Cooper's *Catalogue* as the basis for a much enlarged and comprehensive bibliography of medical and scientific literature in English published before 1700, rather than settling for the more limited, but nonetheless worthy, project of a "verified edition" of a single work.

Peter Elmer
Harlaxton College

LEONARD WEISTROP, *The life and letters of Dr Henry Vining Ogden 1857–1931*. Milwaukee Academy of Medicine Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. 339, [no price stated].

This admirable book features a charming, talented, self-effacing physician and throws new light on William Osler and Harvey Cushing. By determined detective work, Dr Weistrop eventually tracked down 334 letters involving Ogden, William Osler, and Harvey Cushing. They were from the Ogden family, the Milwaukee Academy of Medicine, the Osler Library at McGill, and the Fulton Library at Yale. The Milwaukee Academy wisely authorized this book for its centennial celebration.

Ogden studied medicine under Osler at McGill and boarded in the same house for over two years. These affable, keen, accomplished men became lifelong friends. Cushing found later that Ogden could provide more about Osler's days in Montreal than anyone else. In Milwaukee, Ogden's exceptional clinical ability and kindly interest in patients made him the community's outstanding physician. No other local doctor had such access to the consultant services of William Osler and Harvey Cushing!

Henry Ogden rode hobbies hard. For years, he hiked the prairies and canoed the lakes of Wisconsin and nearby states, expertly collecting and describing specimens of birds, flowers, and animals. His garden contained carefully labelled wild flowers. Ogden's collections in natural history were donated to the Milwaukee Public Museum and the University of Wisconsin.

Both Osler and Cushing admired Ogden's versatility, erudition, and expertise in subjects as varied as natural history, baseball, and English literature. Ogden, who lacked their single-minded devotion to medicine, led a more balanced life. Unlike Ogden, who retired in poverty, the ambitious Osler occasionally charged very large fees. Happily, friends supported Ogden comfortably throughout retirement and a lengthy illness, asserting that he had been undercharging his patients. Dr Weistrop found that Cushing in his image-polishing biography of Osler, when quoting a letter from Osler to Ogden, had deleted a racist statement.

The author has rescued from oblivion the inspirational life of a most engaging medical personality. Furthermore, his excellent book is required reading for any bold spirit about to write another life of Osler.

William B. Spaulding
McMaster University

JOHN M. RIDDLE, *Dioscorides on pharmacy and medicine*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1985, 8vo, pp. xxvii, 298, illus., \$35.00.

Dioscorides on pharmacy and medicine comprises five chapters: Dioscorides' life and the state of the medical art in the first century AD (ch. 1); the method Dioscorides chose to relate his pharmacological information about individual drugs (ch. 2); the organization of his chapters on plants (ch. 3), animal and mineral drugs (ch. 4); the fortune of the *de materia medica* at the hands of Galen and the copyists (ch. 5).

By innovative use of modern pharmacognosy and ethnobotany, Riddle's evaluation of the effectiveness of Dioscorides' pharmacy, as well as his determination of the basis of the underlying organization of the *de materia medica*, is a significant and permanent contribution. He demonstrates cogently what was and has not been hitherto appreciated by practitioner,

copyist, or commentator — namely, that Dioscorides attempted to arrange the chapters on individual substances in terms of drug affinities, based on empirical observation and classification of the medical properties of the drugs and their similar physiological effects. Particularly illustrative is the discussion (pp. 106–111) concerning the tropane alkaloids of the *Solanaceae* family and Book IV, chapters 68, 70–75 of the *de materia medica*. Albeit speculative, but reasonable, is Riddle's conclusion in chapter five that Dioscorides' theoretical system was not acceptable or appreciated because of competitive, alternative theories and/or because he failed to expound explicitly his arrangement and classification of drugs.

Inevitably, there will be disagreement on points of interpretation: the important relationship between popular medicine and the professional art of the Greek *medici* with regard to the *de materia medica* does not appear well examined. In placing Dioscorides in the historical and medical context of the first century AD, Riddle merely comments in passing that “Dioscorides normally omitted what we would call the magical or irrational elements” (ch. 1, p. 18); his discussion later in chapter 2 (pp. 82–88) of “magical usages” is cursory and again stresses “how relatively free Dioscorides' work was of the magical element” (p. 88). Many issues are not raised. For example, not addressed is Temkin's contention “that it is the pharmacological rather than dietetic side of ancient medicine which tended toward magic belief” and his statistics for epilepsy: of forty-five substances recommended by Dioscorides for the malady, over one-third have a superstitious connotation (see O. Temkin, *The falling sickness*, Baltimore, 1971, pp. 78–81). Or with regard to the assimilation of “popular elements” one wonders how the *de materia medica* compares to the relatively contemporary works of Celsus and Scribonius Largus (see, U. Capitani, ‘Celso, Scribonio Largo, Plinio il Vecchio e il loro atteggiamento nei confronti della medicina popolare’ *Maia*, 1972, 24: 120–140)?

Disappointing are several technical aspects: most serious is the frequent mistranslation of the Greek texts (e.g., see the passages, pp. 84–85); ambiguities exist with regard to the author's other writings on Dioscorides: for example, Naples MS. Gr. 1 (saec. VII) is correctly cited (p. 191) (cf. G. Pierleoni, *Catalogus codicum graecorum bibliothecae*. New Series 8, Rome, 1962), but in Riddle, *Dictionary of Scientific Biography (DSB)*, vol. 4, p. 122, n. 7, and *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum (CTC)*, vol. 4, Washington, 1980, p. 5, the manuscript is cited as Vienna MS. Suppl. Gr. 28; Munich MS. 337 is dated to the tenth century (e.g., p. 199), but in *DSB* (p. 121) to the eighth century; the Codex Anicia Iuliana (Vienna MS. Gr. 1. saec. VI) is described as a gift to the Princess Anicia Iuliana in gratitude for her founding of a church in Constantinople, but in *DSB* (p. 120) and *CTC* (p. 4) the manuscript is described as a “wedding gift” and more recently, in Riddle, ‘The herbal in history’ (in Hans Biedermann, *Medica magica*, Birmingham, Alabama, 1986, p. 9) as a “birthday gift”; finally, *lector, cave*: typographical errors abound and are multifarious: for example, p. 35 Paul of Aegina (6th c. AD) for (7th c. AD); p. 181 (cf. p. 280) Clavius Anicius Olybrius for Flavius; p. 279 (cf. p. 212) M. Diehl for C. Diehl; p. 220, n. 4 Dierback for Dierbach, (cf. p. 87 = 279) Behrendes for Berendes; p. 264 Temkins for Temkin; p. 279 Albutt for Allbutt; p. 273 Saumaise . . . Paris, 1689 for Utrecht, 1689 (or Paris, 1629).

J. H. Phillips
Department of Classics, Tufts University

VALENTIN LÖTSCHER (editor), *Felix Platter. Beschreibung der Stadt Basel 1610 und Pestbericht 1610/11* (Basler Chroniken, Band 11), Basle and Stuttgart, Schwabe, 1987, 8vo, pp. xiv, 616, illus., SFr.148.00.

Felix Platter (1536–1614) was one of the most remarkable and prolific of the physicians of Basle. He enjoyed a European-wide reputation, but remained closely attached to his native city, which he served loyally for more than half a century. In 1610, there occurred there a severe outbreak of plague, the seventh in Platter's lifetime. Towards its close, in 1611, he drew up a list of every house in the city, carefully noting its owner. A few weeks later, in April 1611, helped by his half-brother Thomas and occasionally others, he retraced his steps around the town to