

### Book Reviews

FELIX PLATTER, *Tagebuch (Lebensschreibung) 1536–1567*, edited by Valentin Löttscher, Basle, Schwabe, 1976, 8vo, pp. 579, illus., S.Fr.120.00.

We already know a good deal about the Swiss, Felix Platter, the elder (1536–1614), because the account of his experiences as a medical student at Montpellier is available in English (*Beloved son Felix. The journal of Felix Platter a medical student in Montpellier in the sixteenth century*, translated and introduced by Séan Jennett, London, F. Muller, 1961). The present book is an excellent presentation of the diary in its original early new high German, amply supplied with scholarly apparatus in the form of abundant footnotes, a detailed introduction, accounts of other episodes after 1567 and his finances, well-reproduced and plentiful illustrations and maps, an iconography, and a comprehensive index. Those who wish to check or follow further material in the English version may do so in this definitive edition of the journals, providing they can read sixteenth-century German. It is also an important contribution to the history of Renaissance medicine and provides a very high standard of scholarship that others who wish to edit diaries of any period will do well to emulate.

SALLY GREGORY KOHLSTEDT, *The formation of the American scientific community. The American Association for the Advancement of Science 1848–60*, Urbana, Chicago and London, University of Illinois Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. xiii, 264, 32 11., illus., £7.70.

The British Association for the Advancement of Science was founded in 1831, to be followed eventually in 1848 by its American equivalent, the A.A.A.S., now known as the “Triple-A.S.”. This book is the first systematic and detailed study of the early days of the latter, and the author seeks to show that its internal development reflected the stress that existed between the amateur and the professional American scientists then. The major theme of her book is, therefore, the scientific community’s struggle to establish its identity and the problems encountered, some due to a too close comparison with the British Association. In order to understand more readily the first few years of the A.A.A.S., Dr. Kohlstedt has studied its early members collectively, at this time almost every American scientist being affiliated. She also includes a biographical directory of 337 of them, and this itself provides a valuable source of information. The élite were at Harvard or Yale, and medical men were significantly numerous.

It is clear that American professional science learned much from Europe, but also from its own experience with unique geographical conditions. This scholarly work highlights many aspects of its pioneering struggles, and is itself a pioneer in a field awaiting further investigation.

V. V. KOVANOV, *In the name of life. Reflections of a Soviet surgeon*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, [London, Central Books], 1976, 8vo, pp. 327, illus., £1.50.

For those interested in Soviet medicine this autobiography will be most attractive. It has, however, suffered in translation, for difficulty with medical terms has been encountered and occasionally the narrative is incomprehensible. The author makes frequent use of historical material but his knowledge of it is indicated by a reference to “Claudius” Galen (p. 55).

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Kovanov attended medical school in the late 1920s and early 1930s and was therefore imbued with the revolutionary spirit and dreams of Soviet power. His record of these early days is therefore valuable, as is his account of the German invasion of Russia. There is a great deal about the practice of surgery and also research, with occasional references to American published work. As a record of contemporary Soviet surgery this book by the Vice-President of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Medical Sciences can be warmly recommended. Readers are asked to send their impressions to the publishers, which must be a unique request.

ARNOLD TOYNBEE, ARTHUR KOESTLER, *et al.*, *Life after death*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1976, 8vo, pp. vi, 272, £4.95.

An increasing desire to discuss and ponder on the hereafter arises perhaps from current concern with extrasensory perception and with death itself. Fourteen essays, by fifteen authors, are collected together here and deal with many aspects of the problem, those concerned with theology, medicine, anthropology, mysticism, secular culture and extra-sensory perception being represented. The traditional approaches, however, are overshadowed by the non-traditional, in particular Rosalind Heywood's own experiences of contact with the dead.

There is a good deal of historical data throughout the book, especially in the late Professor Toynbee's 'Man's concern with the life after death' and in chapters on primitive societies and Africa, civilizations of pre-Columbian America, religions of the East, and Near Eastern and Islamic societies. It would have been useful also to have had reports from those who have "died" but have been revived and now belong to a club which must be one of the most exclusive in the world.

ERIC TRUDGILL, *Madonnas and magdalens. The origins and development of Victorian sexual attitudes*, London, Heinemann, 1976, 8vo, pp. xii, 336, illus., £6.50.

One of the several paradoxical aspects of the Victorians was their attitude to sex. On the surface they denounced all excesses and perversions, but at the same time encouraged clandestine indulgence. The "madonna" is the eulogized Victorian female of literature, and the "magdalen" is the prostitute, the excessive numbers of them being due to the Victorian male's creation of the immaculate purity of their womenfolk.

Mr. Trudgill describes the origins of Victorian sexual attitudes, showing how some anteceded their era, and then discusses their development. He also attempts to explain the contradictions and complex views held, and the confusion resulting from them. He deals skilfully with the overall social scene and introduces a wealth of detail, especially concerning individuals. It is a pity, therefore, that his references are limited to 340, mostly single-line entries, and the bibliography to eleven unannotated book titles; the index is also rudimentary.

Despite this the author presents an important work and all those studying the social aspects of Victorian medicine will have to consult it. The next project for Mr. Trudgill or others will be to examine contemporary Continental and American attitudes and carry out a comparative study of them.