

Book Reviews

MOLLY LEFEBURE, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: a bondage of opium*, London, Gollancz, 1974, 8vo, pp. 537, illus., £6.00.

Coleridge's opium addiction is well known, as is that of several of his contemporaries. It has not so far, however, been examined in the detail that Miss Lefebure provides in this excellent study. Having had first-hand experience of drug addicts and having been the secretary of a professor of forensic medicine, she brings to her work an acute awareness of Coleridge's involvement, and can show that in the past it has been consistently underestimated in its effect and influence on the man and on his writings.

On the whole, however, her knowledge of drug addiction provides her with perhaps too much insight and she finds references to it in statements and situations which are, in fact, innocent of association. Moreover, she provides a somewhat distorted picture of Coleridge, and one does not gain an impression of the multi-directional genius which he certainly was, in spite of his total drug reliance as described here. What he could have been without this bondage, however, is a fascinating speculation. On the other hand, many of the author's conclusions, derived from a careful examination of all the material now available to the Coleridge scholar, are convincing. For example, the accusation of plagiarism often levelled at Coleridge, and for which there is incontestible evidence, can be explained by his opium-taking and the consequent decay of truth.

As well as a significant contribution to literature and biography, although it is by no means a complete account of Coleridge's life and it ends in 1816 when he begins serious treatment for his addiction, Miss Lefebure's book is of considerable importance in the history of medicine. It is an example of a work that highlights the medical aspects of an outstanding individual which, although of vital significance for the total comprehension of him, are usually either ignored or but mentioned in passing by non-medically orientated authors. There are many such instances and several new biographies are needed to redress this curious situation of neglect and resultant distortion. Kenneth Dewhurst has done just this for John Locke and is currently subjecting Schiller to a similar close medical analysis, and is revealing interpretations and information previously unknown or neglected. It can, of course, be argued that the medical historian is unlikely to have the detailed and critical knowledge of the biographer, his work and his times, as in the present instance. The solution, therefore, is collaboration and in his study on Schiller, Dewhurst is working with a scholar of eighteenth-century German literature.

VERNON W. LIPPARD and ELIZABETH F. PURCELL (editors), *Case histories of ten new medical schools*, New York, The Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, 1972, 8vo, pp. ix, 419, illus., (no price stated).

Dr. Lippard, sometime Dean of Yale University School of Medicine, and his co-author have gathered together accounts of ten of the twenty-two American medical schools founded between 1961 and 1971. They have been written by the deans of these schools, and together they portray for us the many and varied local and national problems attending the establishment of such institutions. A knowledge of each type

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of impediment and the method of resolving it can be of value to others involved with similar plans and negotiations, and those in this country who look forward to an extension of British medical education, when the economic climate improves, will find much of interest and value in this book, even though conditions, pressures, funds and other aspects may be quite different. Dr. Lippard also points out that for the future historian these essays on the developmental aspects of new medical schools will provide important sources. His book is, therefore, doubly welcome.

Thomas Dover's life and legacy, edited and introduced by Kenneth Dewhurst, Metuchen, N.J., The Scarecrow Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. xliii, viii, 240, [facsimile reproduction], (241–247), \$12.50.

This is another volume (No. 44) in the notable series of reprints being published under the auspices of The New York Academy of Medicine.

Thomas Dover (1662–1742) was not only an able physician and the inventor of an antipyretic powder still known and occasionally used today, but he was also an outstandingly successful privateer, and the discoverer of Alexander Selkirk, who probably inspired Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Moreover, he was a pioneer of British mercantile interests in South America (1715–1717), an aspect of his career about which previously little was known.

The sixth edition of Dover's *The ancient physician's legacy to his country* (London, 1742), the last published in his life-time and therefore the most complete, has been selected for reprinting in facsimile. Its reproduction can be justified by the biographical material on its author it contains, and by the light it sheds on contemporary medical practice. Unfortunately the copy used for reproduction is incomplete, for it lacks the half-title and several leaves at the end, including the index. Although this serious defect obviously reflects on the editor, Dr. Dewhurst, he can be in no way responsible for it. It should have been obvious to those who selected the copy that A₁ and R₁ are missing, especially as there is a tie-word on Q₈; in fact it lacks R₁ to R₄.

It is a pity that this error should mar what otherwise is everything a good reprint should be. The necessary criteria are: an elegant and accurate facsimile reprint of the original; a scholarly introduction, fully documented from original sources, and written by the accepted authority on the subject; editorial annotations to elucidate the text. All but the first are present here. Dr. Dewhurst's outstanding biography of Dover, *The quicksilver doctor* (1957) is now out of print, but he includes in his introduction to this reprint important additional information recently acquired. The two books therefore complement each other.

Without doubt, Dover's classic is essential for the study of early eighteenth-century British medicine, and Dewhurst's additions to it greatly increase its value to the scholar. In view of Dover's commercial dealings and the hitherto unpublished data on this aspect of his remarkable career which are now provided, this work will be of great interest and usefulness to those engaged in economic and social history of the eighteenth century. For all these it can be recommended enthusiastically, with the proviso that they should consult a complete copy of the *Legacy* in order to surmount the transmitted mutilation.