

Book Reviews

Chemical, Medical and Pharmaceutical Books printed before 1800: A catalog of holdings in the University of Wisconsin Library edited by JOHN NEU, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1965, pp. viii, 280, \$6.00.

We are still not provided with 'keys' to many of the distinguished collections of manuscripts and books in the history of medicine and science that are attached to smaller universities and institutions. The book under notice can thus be sure of the gratitude of scholars in many fields if its example is followed by others. It is in itself most useful, informative, and at its low price highly welcome. For it forms a guide through such illustrious collections as that of Dennis I. Duveen in the history of chemistry and alchemy and of the late Edgar Goldschmid in historical anatomy and pathology. Both these collections were acquired by the University of Wisconsin libraries which had already profited by the collecting activities of such authorities as William Snow Miller, the author of the classic on the histology of the lung and its history, and the unforgettable George Urdang whose work opened up a new chapter in the history of pharmacy. One special feature of the catalogue is the inclusion of many items of the Duveen collection which had not been listed in Duveen's alchemical bibliography, quite apart from the fact that after the acquisition of the Duveen collection the Boyle and Priestley libraries, brought together by Hugh Sinclair, were added. The items are given in two columns with page numbers (of one-volume works) and an indication of the presence of illustrations and charts, but without giving their number and nature, and without listing frontispieces and portraits.

WALTER PAGEL

Surgery in America, Selected Writings, by A. SCOTT EARLE, Philadelphia and London, Saunders, 1965, pp. 280, illus., 59s. 6d.

This is a beautifully produced book containing extracts of American surgical writings from before the British Government's surrender of the country up to the writings of Murphy and Halstead in this century. Therefore the book covers the two centuries beginning with the advertisement inserted in the *Boston News Letter* by the grateful parents of the patient of the third lithotomy performed in 1710 by Zabdiel Boylston, up to the articles by Murphy and Halstead at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The whole book is splendidly illustrated, many of the portraits being from the actual collection of the author, who has an excellent collection of historical medical portraits as well as a consummate knowledge of the surgical history of America. He states in the preface that these papers were unearthed during the preparation of a surgical history of America soon to be published. The two books will make a splendid pair for the bookshelves of the growing body of medical historians.

I particularly like the historical footnotes which go with every doctor mentioned. Very seldom does the author say that he knows nothing of any doctor mentioned. Thus the young acting assistant surgeon, Hichbom, is only mentioned as having been killed in the battle of Chancellorville while alone in an exposed dressing station while serving with Shaw Billings, who gives a wonderful description of the bitter murderous Civil War.

There is a tremendous thrill in the story of Ephraim McDowell's first operation to remove an ovarian cyst on Mrs. Crawford, who rode the sixty miles from Greenburg

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to Danville for her operation. As he made the incision, he found her abdomen bruised from the pommel of the saddle. Five days later he found her making her own bed and twenty days later she remounted her horse and rode back the sixty miles through the woods to Greenburg and survived her surgeon by twelve years.

The stories are intensely interesting and completely honest and authentic. Particularly interesting is the account of Warren's first experience in 1846 with ether anaesthesia. Sim's struggle to cure the poor slave girl Lucy with her huge vesico-vaginal fistula makes a fascinating and heroic story as does Murphy's first arterial anastomosis in 1896. It is altogether one of the most readable and absorbing books ever produced, and illustrates the great contribution of American Surgery to the good of mankind.

A. DICKSON WRIGHT

Bibliography of the History of Medicine of the United States and Canada, 1939–60, edited by G. MILLER, Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1965, pp. xvi, [2] 428.

One of the many projects which Henry Sigerist helped to launch was an annual bibliography of articles and books on American medical history. Since 1939—the year when this began—Genevieve Miller and her associates have continued to produce their invaluable tool, but until now we have hoped in vain for periodic cumulations. This deficiency no longer exists. In one classificatory sequence (almost identical to that proposed in 1939 by Sigerist) Miss Miller has gathered together all the material indexed during those twenty-one years, and has added to it a certain number of references originally overlooked.

Any judgement of this book must take account of the limiting factors which have always been inherent in the organization of the annual bibliographies. It would be unfair, for instance, to ask for complete coverage of the literature in face of the editor's frank admission that facilities never made this a workable proposition. Help was entirely voluntary throughout. Nevertheless one thousand journals have been indexed, and if there are certain errors of omission within them they surely cannot be of serious proportions judging by the size of this bibliography.

The classification has fifteen sections, the more corpulent ones being Biography, Diseases, Local history, Medical specialties, Pharmacy and Public Health. Cross references sometimes guide the reader from subject to subject, more often from subject to biography. The preface warns the user not to expect too much from the classification unless he is prepared to first study the table of contents. But he will have to do more than consult the table of contents to understand the reason for placing 'Appendectomy' under 'Diseases' whilst other surgical operations are to be found under 'Medical specialties'. Other cases of inconsistency resulting from a basically unsound classification only come to light gradually as one uses the bibliography. For instance, a whole series of articles on paediatrics is scattered throughout the section on 'Medical specialties' without so much as a reference from the section 'Paediatrics'; an article on anaesthesia and psychiatry appears under 'Psychiatry' but not under 'Anaesthesiology'. We are still left, however, with an impressive amount of information and can only regret that the compilers were not able to devote more time to arranging it better.

E. GASKELL