

Book Notices

EDWARD O. WILSON, *Sociobiology. The new synthesis*, Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975, 4to, pp. ix, 697, illus., £11.00.

It is often said that during each decade one book stands out as a revolutionary and seminal work. Some are now claiming that Professor Wilson's book may be of this degree of significance. There is little historical matter *per se* in it, but historians of medicine and of biology should be aware of its existence. "Sociobiology" is concerned with the interactions of biology with the social sciences, and deals specifically with the social behaviour of all organisms, from bacteria to man, showing that it has a biological basis. In particular, the author examines the patterns of social evolution in specific animal groups. From his observations of animal social behaviour he is able to reach some interesting conclusions concerning human nature, although they will not go unchallenged. Likewise some of Wilson's contentions regarding the relevance of biology to sociology, and also to ethics will not be accepted readily.

Whether or not this is the book of the decade it is certainly a pioneering study in the emerging discipline of sociobiology, and will incite much comment. It deserves close attention.

DEREK DE SOLLA PRICE, *Science since Babylon*, enlarged edition, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1975, 8vo, xvi, 215, £7.50 (£1.75 paperback).

The first edition of this book was published in 1961 and it drew well-deserved praise (*Isis*, 1962, 53: 395–396; *N.Y. Times Book Review*, 10 September 1961, p. 6; *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, 1962, 68: 170; *Library J.*, 1961, 86: 2326; etc.).

It is not a full survey of the history of science as its title suggests, but consists of six essays based on the author's own research experience, and ranging from Greek and Chinese clockwork to diseases of science which discusses the problem of the growth of science and the availability of manpower. Professor Price's vigorous style exudes enthusiasm, and it is little wonder that a new edition was found necessary.

It now appears in enlarged form with postscripts to the original chapters, a few corrections and explanations, and three new pieces already in print: the history of automata; a study of geometric amulets; the relations between science and technology. The book continues to offer a great deal of interesting and important material and it should be read by all medical historians as a means of expanding their necessary background in the history of science.

REAY TANNAHILL, *Flesh and blood. A history of the cannibal complex*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1975, 8vo, pp. [ix], 209, illus., £3.75.

The author, having recently published an excellent book on *Food in history* (*Med. Hist.*, 1975, 19: 212), now turns her attention to an aspect of nutrition that has not before received general consideration in English. The history of cannibalism stretches from pre-history to the recent Andes air-crash and the Highgate cemetery incident, and the author has gathered together a large amount of information on it, with chapter notes and a bibliography. She traces the custom from the sacrifices of primitive man through periods of history, when to devour human flesh was the only way to avoid starvation, for example, in the Cairo famine of 1201. The Aztecs of the New World, the non-conformists of Europe, werewolves and vampires, and their need for

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human blood are all described, and next the cannibalism encountered by explorers of primitive communities. Finally the few examples from the twentieth century are cited.

On the whole the author writes with less authority on this topic than she did on food and nutrition in general. Her style is dramatic and attractive, but she has been somewhat uncritical in the accumulation of her material. Furthermore, she lacks the depth of knowledge in the various historical periods adequately to account for the many events, the descriptions of which, crowd the pages; and there is insufficient discussion of the several vital issues the book raises. Nevertheless, as a pioneer work it opens up areas that will no doubt be investigated by others in greater detail.

W. R. TROTTER, *Man the healer*, London, Priory Press, 1975, 4to, pp. 96, illus., £3.50.

Dr. Trotter's book is a general survey of medicine employing the whig interpretation of history. According to this attitude, we, in 1975, have reached the Promised Land and all of medicine before the 1940s was primitive, ". . . theories were wildly out of touch with reality . . ." and ". . . the old treatments were mostly useless. . . ." (p. 7). Then in about the 1820s ". . . doctors seemed rather suddenly to come to their senses. . . ." (p. 7), etc., etc. Having ourselves elucidated the correct situation, which will not be markedly altered by further advances, we are in a position of omnipotence to look back in pity at our benighted predecessors! To write history thus is to write non-history. If in addition a survey contains nothing new and is obviously culled from a few simple secondary sources, one naturally wonders why such a work should be produced. There is, however, in this instance a rich collection of illustrations, some of them unusual, and the sections on modern medicine are good.

GUY WILLIAMS, *The age of agony. The art of healing c.1700-1880*, London, Constable, 1975, 8vo, pp. xi, 237, illus., £5.95.

The basic purpose of history is to depict and interpret ideas, people and events as they were in the past. It is obvious that to do this efficiently evaluation must be carried out in the context of contemporary ideas, people and events. To describe past eras in the light of modern knowledge and opinion, and then to pass judgments on them is an erroneous, and, in medical history, a much too frequent approach.

This book is a classic example of non-history, because the author begins with the premise that we live now in a medically enlightened age, whereas the eighteenth century was a mish-mash of false ideas, absurd remedies and stupid practitioners, in other words, an "age of agony". If we also observe that it deals almost exclusively with Britain, although this is not stated in the title, that the author seeks sensationalism and shuns objectivity, that he expands insignificant episodes and ignores or skips over the significant, that he seeks the dramatic in his journalistic chapter headings, that eighteenth-century medical practitioners are characterized as fools, quacks or imposters, and that the author's qualifications to write on the history of medicine are having been brought up in a medical family and having written books on Scotland Yard and suburbia, it is difficult to justify the time spent even looking at this book, let alone reading or buying it.

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History of Science, volumes 12–13, 1974–1975, Science History Publications, pp. 308 each volume, £9 each volume, bound.

The high standards of this periodical are maintained throughout these two further volumes. Although devoted primarily to the history of science there are, however, many essays, surveys and book reviews which are of vital interest to the historian of medicine. Even if they do not deal specifically with medical topics, they fill in the background of science which is so essential for the medical historian. Examples of this type of article include 'The British scientific community 1700–1900', 'Science in the Scottish Enlightenment', 'Eighteenth-century biology', 'Nineteenth-century anthropology', 'The early Royal Society' and 'The great chain of being'. The more particularly medical topics include Greek medicine, Paracelsus, genetics, chemical medicine, Coleridge, the double helix, perception and physiology of the mind, psychology, biochemistry, Galenism, and Cesalpino.

It is clear that there is a considerable amount of medical history in this praiseworthy publication and it, therefore, follows that it should be available to all who are concerned with this topic, professional or part-time.

CARLETON B. CHAPMAN and ELINOR C. REINMILLER, *The physiology of physical stress. A selective bibliography, 1500–1964*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. vii, 369, £9.00.

The physiological investigation of physical exercise has been a popular line of research for several centuries, and the literature it has generated is now voluminous. In addition to being vast it has also become very complex, and, therefore, a key to it is most welcome. The author's bibliography consist of references to basic physiological, and some clinical, work on physical stress and includes books, review articles, and original articles. The guiding criterion in their search was to find sources of concepts and basic techniques, and later articles expanding the former or modifying the latter. Most of the material dealing with the techniques of sports and the effects of exercise on the ECG has been excluded. There are two parts: an author index (pp. 3–191); a subject index (pp. 195–369), arranged in a simple alphabetical sequence.

As far as earlier historical literature is concerned, a good deal of classical physiology of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is included. This book will, therefore, be of use to those working in the history of general physiology as well as those concerned with contributions to the study of physical stress.

MANFRED WASERMAN (compiler), *Bibliography on oral history*, New York, The Oral History Association, 1975, 8vo, pp. vii, 53, [no price stated].

Listed here are works on oral history published through 1974, providing a revision of the 1971 edition. Oral history is not a new technique, but it has received considerable impetus recently, mainly from technology. Thus there are now thirty-seven books based entirely, or in part, on this type of material, and membership of the Oral History Society has increased ten-fold in the last eight years.

The listing is by author, first of all articles and then books, with a subject-guide. Each entry has a brief annotation. The compiler has, therefore, prepared a most useful guide to past and current activity in this important part of historiography.

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LLOYD LAING, *The archaeology of Late Celtic Britain and Ireland c. 400–1200 A.D.*, London, Methuen, 1975, 8vo, pp. xxvii, 451, illus., £11.00 (£4.50 paperback).

The regional field archaeology of Scotland, Ireland, Wales and South West England, and the Picts, Irish and Viking settlements in Britain, are first discussed, and then the material culture of the early Christian Celts is dealt with in detail. It possesses a number of defects judged as a history, but it is essentially an archaeological compendium and brings to the reader a wealth of accurately documented evidence, well illustrated and referenced.

GEOFFREY MARKS and WILLIAM K. BEATTY, *The precious metals of medicine*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975, 8vo, pp. xxv, 294, illus., \$9.95.

"Precious metals" includes here many more than the usual gold, silver and platinum which receive this epithet. The authors are, in fact, concerned with metals in medicine, in general: their use as protective amulets and in therapy; their employment in the making of surgical instruments, sutures, needles, vessels, prostheses, etc.; their role in diagnosis and treatment in the form of radio-active isotopes.

Neither author is medically qualified, and their book, therefore, suffers somewhat from a purely journalistic and bibliographical approach, with an uncritical compilation resulting. But on the whole they provide a useful historical survey of a topic not previously tackled. The text is well written and well documented, with a terminal bibliography. But, as often occurs in books on medical topics written by non-medical writers, the quotations are too frequent and overlong. Presumably this practice compensates for a limited ability to be critical and for a deficiency in the ability to deal with medical material from the literature.

ERIC NEIL, *William Harvey and the circulation of the blood*, London, Priory Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. 96, illus., £3.25.

As is the case with other titles in this series one wonders why it was thought necessary to provide yet another book on a well-known theme, especially as adequate treatises on it already exist in profusion. The author is a distinguished physiologist and he recites the history of the cardiovascular system from Greek antiquity to Stephen Hales. As an introduction he gives a brief and useful account of the modern view of the circulation and then deals with pre-Harveian, Harveian and post-Harveian ideas. Unfortunately the first of these sections contains many mistakes, including, predictably, a reference to "Claudius" Galen on p. 21. and the well-used, but now discredited and erroneous, circulation diagram of Charles Singer is reproduced on p. 23. It seems a pity that it was thought necessary to produce a book intended for the layman as well as for the medical profession which transmits these and other serious errors.

PETROS DE BAZ, *The story of medicine*, New York, Philosophical Library, 1975, 8vo, pp. 99, illus., \$6.00.

There are two parts of this book by the late Dr. P. de Baz: the first deals with medicine up to the present day, the second with Arabic medicine. It is intended for the layman and physician, but can be recommended to neither.

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NICHOLAS M. GREENE, *Anesthesiology and the university*, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott, (Oxford, Blackwell Scientific Publications), 1975, 8vo, pp. ix, 164, £7.00.

The author is dealing with academic anaesthesiology in the United States, a topic not previously discussed at this length. He wonders if anaesthesiology represents an identifiable body of knowledge, the study of which constitutes an intellectual discipline. The question seems a curious one, but he spends the whole book answering it and determining the subject's strengths, weaknesses and challenges, its obligations to universities and, in reverse, the responsibilities borne by universities for its nurture and support. In so doing he traces the history of anaesthesiology in four sections: the beginning (1846–1900); the growth of medical professionalism; the years of maturation (1940–1965); the present (1965–1975). He then extrapolates into the future (1975–2000). The last two of these (present and future) occupy three-fifths of the book. For those concerned with the history of anaesthesiology, universities and of the evolution of the specialties of medicine this will prove to be an interesting book, in which the historical approach is shown to be rewarding.

HOWARD W. HAGGARD, *Devils, drugs, and doctors. The story of the science of healing from medicine-man to doctor*, East Ardsley, Wakefield, E. P. Publishing, 1975, 8vo, pp. xxii, 405, illus., £6.50.

Apart from a somewhat naïve dust-jacket presentation nothing has been added to this facsimile reprint of the 1929 edition, which received an enthusiastic reception in *Ann. med. Hist.*, 1930, 2 (N.S.): 132–133, *Br. med. J.*, 1929, ii: 1163, and elsewhere. Unfortunately, the errors listed by reviewers have not been corrected.

The author, who was Associate Professor of Applied Physiology at Yale University, provides the usual popular presentation of medicine from the earliest times, well illustrated but with no references. It is by no means a complete history of medicine, for instead of adopting the traditional chronological approach the book is divided into topics such as obstetrics, anaesthesia, surgery, epidemic diseases and the healing art. Attention is drawn in particular to the opposition of the medical profession to what we now know were advances, and to popular prejudices. In general social aspects of medicine are given special prominence.

As a well-written and entertaining survey compiled before the introduction of sulpha-drugs and antibiotics, it can be recommended for both medical and lay-man.

IAN CRICHTON, *The art of dying*, London, Peter Owen, 1976, 8vo, pp. 166, £4.50.

One of the most significant advances achieved by our present society is the development of healthier attitudes to death. A number of recent books have dealt with it from the historical point of view or with current problems concerning it. This book mainly considers the latter, although some historical material is included throughout. Chapters discuss attitudes to death, its statistics and physiology, its associations with medicine and the law, care of the dying, and disposal of the dead, and finally, "glimpses into the unknown". There is a brief bibliography.

Despite the fact that the taboo of death is being dispelled, further enlightenment is still needed and Mr. Crichton's book, which is written undramatically and based

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on wide research, will, without doubt, assist in this process. The very act of reading it will dispel for many the myths, mysteries and fear of a physiological and inevitable event.

JOHN S. CUNNINGHAM, *Kingdom in the sky*, London, Souvenir Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. xii, 172, illus., £4.00.

In 1966 the Britain-Nepal Medical Trust was set up and three years later a group of doctors and nurses were at work in Katmandu. The author of this book was the leader and he relates here the preparations for the venture, the journey to Nepal and the pioneer work carried out there. The medical conditions and problems in a relatively primitive community are of particular interest, and the energy, imagination, devotion and goodwill manifested by the members of the team deserve high praise.

VERNON COLEMAN, *The medicine men*, London, Temple Smith, 1975, 8vo, pp. 192, £3.25.

Dr. Coleman, a general practitioner, is alarmed at the power wielded by the pharmaceutical industry in modern medicine, and at the resultant over-prescribing of powerful drugs. He traces briefly and accurately the history of medicines today. From his own practical experience the author is able to emphasize the dire consequences of drug dependence on the individual and on the quality of health care. Dr. Coleman is concerned to make people aware of this situation, for the remedy is in the hands of the medical profession and of their patients. In fact the book's subtitle, only printed on the dust-jacket, is 'Drug makers, doctors and patients'. It will prove a useful survey of the present state of therapy for the historian whose researches are meaningless if they do not connect with today's medical practice.

HANS-JOACHIM VON SCHUMANN, *Sexualkunde und Sexualmedizin in der klassische Antike*, Munich, Verlag UNI-Druck, 1975, 8vo, pp. i, cols. 5-128, DM.16.00.

The contents are in three groups, gynaecology, "andrology" and sexuality, which are subdivided into a total of sixty-six topics. All possible aspects of the subject are dealt with, and references are made to primary and secondary sources. The book is, therefore, a most useful and compact reference tool, despite the fact that this data can be found elsewhere, although not in such a concentrated form.

J. G. L. BURNBY and T. D. WHITE, *Plague, pills and surgery. The story of the Bromfields*, Edmonton Hundreds Historical Society, Occasional Papers (N.S.), No. 31, 1975, pp. 12, 40p.

An account is given of Thomas Bromfield (1643-1711), and his descendants who practised in London in the medical and paramedical professions. Being fully documented and derived mainly from manuscript sources, it is an excellent example of local medical and pharmaceutical history. There is an urgent need for much more of this type of research.