

Book Reviews

instalment of a new classic. This applies equally to the text and to the footnotes which contain vital information on the extensive literature which the author has used in his new and masterly appraisal of savants and facts.

WALTER PAGEL

American Medical Bibliography, 1639–1783, by F. GUERRA, New York, Lathrop Harper (Publication No. 40, Department of History of Science and Medicine, Yale University), 1962, pp. 885, 187 plates, 10 gns.

With the publication of this bibliography Dr. Guerra has achieved miracles of transmutation and compression; he has put into our hands a guide in which we can trace, almost day by day, the medical life of colonial America. Books, broadsides, almanacs, newspapers, periodicals, Congressional and provincial decrees—all are recorded in this one volume-work which also contains a luxuriant growth of indexes, tables and bibliographies.

Bibliographical appraisal of this book is best left to specialist journals. As a historical source, it is doubly effective as a chronicle of events and a stimulator of suggestive lines of research. We can trace, for instance, early signs of American nationalism in the rise of medical botany and the preference for home-grown remedies. In the *Boston Evening-Post* we can read of an Indian herb-cure for cancer; it is also revealing to follow the progress of one Edward Joyce who advertised himself in 1762 as able to cure 'venereal diseases in any stage' and, by 1768, was offering his 'Great American Balsam, made in Long-Island, superior by Trial to any imported from Europe'. Or in search of American eclecticism, there is the case of two negroes emancipated for their discovery of antidotes against the rattlesnake bite, scurvy, yaws and pox. There are amusing side-lights, too, none more so than the incident of the 'Granado-shell' tossed into Cotton Mather's room, bearing the legend: 'Cotton Mather I was once one of your Meeting; But the cursed lye you told of —— you know who; made me leave you, You dog, and Damn you, I will Enoculate you with this, with a Pox to You'.

Eighteenth-century America's greatest contribution to medicine was, as Dr. Guerra himself says, in epidemiology. On the other hand, a count of the number of references to surgery (31) and amputations (5) reveals, where many histories might not, the relative poverty of colonial American experience in this field. The emphasis on hygiene is seen very clearly, from Dr. Guerra's analysis of periodicals, to have owed a great deal to the War of Independence, and to the concurrent popularity of Benjamin Rush's gospel of cleanliness, diet and exercise. During this period hospitals were vitally necessary to both military and civilians, the interests of the one coinciding with those of the other.

Dr. Guerra conceived and carried through his work on a grand scale, as befits a grand theme; the high standard of printing and binding only add to the book's distinction.

E. GASKELL

Scientific Books, Libraries and Collectors, by JOHN L. THORNTON and R. I. J. TULLY, 2nd revised edition, London, The Library Association, 1962, pp. 406, illus, 68s. (51s. to members of the L.A.)

Historians of science and librarians alike will welcome the reappearance in print of this valuable work. Picking one's way through the vast primary and secondary literature of past science, to present a coherent and compact account, is no mean achievement. In many ways it is a more demanding task than to seek the illusory goal of encyclopaedic comprehensiveness. At every stage the authors had to evaluate

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and edit their material severely. Also, given the programme of producing such a work, there is never the excuse of being overwhelmed by the bulk of material to be published. In view of all this, a review of the second edition of the book cannot be much more than a repetition of the congratulations which greeted the original.

As in the earlier edition, the book goes in chronological order from antiquity, in each general period classifying publications by subject and then by author. The last third of the book is devoted to special topics, including scientific societies, periodicals, bibliographies, and libraries.

The authors are fully aware that any specialist will find errors of omission and commission in his own field, naturally the most important one. Rather than pick up such points, I would like to draw the authors' attention to some corrigible omissions in bibliography itself. These relate to the reprinting or translating of old scientific books and papers. To begin, the great series of 'Ostwalds Klassiker' receives no mention, either as a whole or as editions of the various works. This is unfortunate, because, for those who read German, they are an easily accessible treasury of texts and commentaries of scattered and rare sources. On a smaller scale, the Gauthier-Villars series 'Maîtres de la Pensée Scientifique' are also valuable. The early volumes were in print at least until the recent take-over by Pergamon Press, and may yet be saved from the pulp-mill. The German reprint of Darmstaedter's *Handbuch zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Technik*, which runs in a strictly chronological order, may not have appeared when this second edition went to press. It is especially worth while to the historian wanting to trace developments in a restricted period.

I have on occasion advised librarians wanting to build up a collection in the history of science, and here we rely almost entirely on recent translations and reprints. The firm of Dover Books deserves honourable mention in this connexion. They provide paperbacks of a very superior quality as pieces of bookmaking, and at a reasonable price. Their list includes a good proportion of the English translations of the classics which appeared between one hundred years and fifty years ago. 'Basic Books' also reprint classics, although with more of an eye on appearance than on economy. Recently the Oldbourne Press (London) has entered the reprint field, and their lists are worthy of systematic attention.

All these points can be considered as peripheral to the history of scientific books and their publication, but they could usefully be tucked in at the end of the chapter on publishing. From my experience, I am sure that attention to this aspect of publishing would enhance the practical usefulness of the book.

Thornton-Tully as we have it, is by far the best general bibliographical tool available to the historian of science. One hopes that it will stay in print, and continue to be improved. Perhaps at some stage the authors could invite revisions of various sections by specialists, requiring only that the revised text does not exceed the original in length. In some such fashion, it could be developed into a classic among handbooks.

J. RAVETZ

A Treatise on the Medical Jurisprudence of Insanity by Isaac Ray, edited by WINFRED OVERHOLSER, Cambridge, Mass., The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962, pp. xvii+376.

This is a worthy reprint of a landmark in the history of American psychiatry, an authoritative forward-looking exposition of the medico-legal relations of insanity which superseded all that had been written when it appeared in 1838 and which is still, in some of the principles advocated, ahead of modern practice. Ray was one of the pioneers who made important contributions to the specialty at a comparatively