

## Book Reviews

interest of completeness, a number of common secondary works and miscellaneous items of little interest are listed with the same care as sixteenth- or seventeenth-century books. We learn, for instance, that Dr Kiefer acquired Volume 1 and Volume 2, nos. 1 and 2, of *Medical History*. We also learn (to our surprise) that Aristotle actually wrote *Aristotle's Masterpiece*. Full bibliographical details are given and most authors are identified by dates. Only Garrison-Morton numbers are included, although no more than a fraction of the titles achieved mention in this more general reference work. Other citations, such as to Wellcome, Osler, or Waller, might have increased the bibliographical value of the catalogue. "Kiefer" is unlikely to become another standard guide, however. It is simultaneously too specialized and too eclectic, and thus to be perused by those primarily concerned with the history of urology or human sexuality. But at its price, the paperback version is good value for money.

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ARTHUR ROOK and RODNEY DAWBER, *Diseases of the hair and scalp*, Oxford, Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1982, 8vo, pp. ix, 571, illus., [no price stated].

This is an important book. There have been previous monographs in English on the subject but never a major work such as this. In the opinion of the reviewer, it will be standard for many years.

It is chiefly concerned with the embryology, physiology, pathology, and the clinical aspects of the hair and scalp, and so is of limited interest to most readers of *Medical History*. However, many disorders described are introduced by a historical account, and it is a mine of information in this respect. We meet with many famous names: Alibert, Brocq, Celsus (alopecia areata), Hippocrates (a bearded lady), Lassar, Sabouraud, Unna, Willan, Erasmus Wilson, and others.

It is of interest to know that 4,000 years ago in Egypt baldness was causing concern, and that women were using mud to wave their hair. The authors support the belief that the hair of both Sir Thomas More and Queen Marie Antoinette turned white during the night before execution.

Some disorders of the hair have appeared in paintings. The rare condition, hypertrichosis lanuginosa, with excessive hair on the cheeks and elsewhere, is portrayed in Paolo Cagliari's 'The Wild Boy', and kings collected examples to entertain courtiers as did showmen to amuse the public. "Shock-headed Peter", a character in a German nursery rhyme, was often shown in illustrations and is an example of the uncombable hair syndrome.

The chapter on psychological factors is of great interest to the social historian, dealing as it does with such matters as punishment by hair-cutting and the significance of beards, long hair in men, and other hairstyles.

This book is written with clarity and smoothness of style. It is authoritative, erudite, and comprehensive. The majority of the many illustrations are excellent.

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JOHN C. SHEEHAN, *The enchanted ring. The untold story of penicillin*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, MIT Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xvi, 224, illus., £10.50.

Much has been written on penicillin, and its complicated story could not be bettered by fiction. The accounts of its isolation, the determination of its structure, of its synthesis, and of the preparation and commercialization of analogues ensures that the molecule occupies a unique position in the annals of microbiology and organic chemistry. John Sheehan, the author of the present book, has been involved with penicillin chemistry for a large part of his long career. In his account of the penicillin story he has drawn freely on US government files, and he discloses many untold aspects of this remarkable drug. This is all highly commendable, and unquestionably the story is of considerable topical interest, so much so that it is very difficult to put down the book once started. Unfortunately, however, the author takes a highly prejudiced and outspoken stance in his account, and, as many of the people involved in the story are still alive, it is certain that reactions to many of the statements will be strong, and unfavourable.

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Credit for the discovery of penicillin and its antibacterial effects has been ascribed in varying degrees in the past either to Fleming or to Florey and Chain, all recipients of a Nobel Prize in 1945. Sheehan certainly makes no secret of his support of Fleming, and his facts and arguments are presented to this end. There will be many readers who disagree. The exploitation of the drug in the early and mid-forties makes fascinating reading, especially the correspondence and agreements between the US and UK governments and the involvement of so many of the major pharmaceutical companies. The account of the determination of the beta-lactam, as against the oxazolone, structure will also revive old controversies, but it is the description of Sheehan's personal contributions that will arouse most argument. No one doubts the elegance or the importance of his rational synthesis of penicillin V, which, of course, is presented in considerable detail although one would have preferred so many accolades to have come from others. The story of the patent litigation (Beecham Laboratories and Sheehan) consequent on the discovery of the semi-synthetic penicillins is again a one-sided presentation, and it is a pity that personal animosities figure so prominently. One is bound to ask whom the author really believes he will convince with his book. Publication of much hitherto unrecorded documentation from the Office of Scientific Research and Development is indeed of great interest, but the presentation of so much material with strong personal prejudice invites contributions from those with opposing views. It would have been useful to have all this information assembled in one book.

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PAULE DUMAÎTRE, *La curieuse destinée des planches anatomiques de Gérard de Laïresse, peintre en Hollande. Laïresse, Bidloo, Cowper*, (Nieuwe Nederlandse Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde en der Natuurwetenschappen no. 6), Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1982, 8vo, pp. xvii, 107, illus., Dfl. 25.00 (paperback).

This book is a joint biography of three men: the painter Gérard de Laïresse (1641–1711), the anatomist Govaert Bidloo (1649–1713), and the surgeon William Cowper (1666–1709). Bidloo wrote the text to an anatomical atlas which was illustrated with engravings after drawings by de Laïresse. It was published in Amsterdam in 1685. In 1698, a new edition was issued in England with new letterpress by Cowper and some new plates but with inadequate acknowledgement of Bidloo. Unfortunately, Bidloo was a contentious character, and the plagiarism (as he not unreasonably regarded it) led to a bitter controversy. Although the story has been told before, Mlle Dumaître is the first to narrate it in detail and to place it within the otherwise separate careers of Bidloo, Cowper, and de Laïresse both before and after the *affaire*.

It makes a good read, but the biographical mode adopted here slides over some obvious questions. What were the roles of Bidloo and de Laïresse in the production of the book? Did the artist merely illustrate the dissections, or did he design them as well? Do his designs depict dissections that cannot be made in reality? Are the dissections traditional or original? Were the designs influential? Above all, how did the extraordinary drawing-style adopted by Gérard de Laïresse come into being? Are his non-anatomical drawings in the same style? Should we accept Herrlinger's idea (*Gesnerus* 1966) that it was a fusion of "French academicism" and the Dutch still-life? If so, what Dutch paintings or drawings resemble de Laïresse's anatomical illustrations? These problems require a more analytical treatment.

What is new in the present account is that it is founded not merely on the engravings published in 1685 but on de Laïresse's original drawings, which still exist, known to few, in the Réserve de la Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Médecine de Paris. They were acquired by Théodore Tronchin in Amsterdam, auctioned in Paris after his death, and bought in 1796 for the new École de Santé. The procedure of purchase has been recovered from the original minutes of the school. The final chapter tells how, in a scene worthy of René Clair, the drawings were ordered up for the admiration of the Minister of Public Instruction on a visit in 1903 but were found to be missing. They were later discovered in the possession of the widow of a certain Monsieur D., who had also "obtained" from the library an atlas-folio of Cheselden, probably