

Book Reviews

texts. The translator has also made some Arabic studies in his effort to lose no verbal nuance in his book, although he has made no attempt like Fitzgerald to copy the poetry of this medical Omar Khayyam.

Brooding over all Avicenna's work and strangling his common sense is the devotion to the medicine of Galen. When clinical observation struggles to the surface one appreciates the wisdom of Avicenna; the mental dullness and migraine from over-sleeping, the craggy hardness of cancer, the white motions of obstructive jaundice, the description of coma vigil and carphologia, the importance of melaena, herpes as a sign of recovery in pneumonia etc. These are some among many of his wise observations.

There are plenty of health hints, some a little hard to understand, such as promise of gout to those who cohabit after meals, and sadness as a cure for obesity. The surgical advice is sound on everything from ophthalmology to orthopaedics, and from gynaecology to the guinea worm.

A review of Avicenna's life and achievements precedes the translation. It is an amazing story of political intrigue, philosophy, medicine and travel. Dante said that he had the greatest mind of all his age. He seems to have had the poetry and genius of Goethe and the inventive powers of Leonardo da Vinci.

Avicenna met his fate in his colon where an obstructing cancer defied all his complicated clysters, and he died after a very full life at the age of fifty-seven.

A. DICKSON-WRIGHT

Medical Department, United States Army, Surgery in World War II: Thoracic Surgery, vol. 1, Editor in Chief, Colonel JOHN BOYD COATES, JR., MC., Editor for Thoracic Surgery, F. B. BERRY, Washington, D.C., Office of the Surgeon General, 1963, pp. 394, illus., \$4.25.

The Medical Department of the United States Army has now produced a most informative work on thoracic surgery as it developed and was practised in the Second World War. There is an interesting historical note giving facts and figures from various battles, and one realizes how much the development of modern thoracic surgery has owed to surgery of wartime trauma. In wartime surgery administrative considerations predominate, and questions of transport and delivery of a live patient to an active medical centre remain the paramount tasks. It is in dealing with this aspect that this book makes most interesting reading, showing some of the problems that war involves, and indicating how policies in the treatment of certain types of injury developed. Presumably, on a battlefield the efficiency of emergency treatment determines many of the survivals, and it is often the multiplicity of injury that makes the choice of priorities so difficult. Appropriately the last section of the book discusses reconditioning and rehabilitation, without which even the most expert surgery will not achieve a great deal.

THOMAS HOLMES SELLORS

Der Systematische Katalog in Institutsbibliotheken am Beispiel der Medizinhistorik, by GUNTER MANN, Frankfurt, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Medizin, Naturwissenschaft und Technik e.V., 1962, pp. 24, illus., DM. 2.50.

Dr. Mann has written several contributions to medical history; he now turns his attention to the straightforward recording and speedy recovery of information in this field. He begins with an historical outline of subject-cataloguing in Germany noting

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the occasional bitter controversies. The modern idea of a classification system which could keep pace with the rapid development of the sciences begins with the scheme devised by H. W. Eppelsheimer in 1929, based on constant elements in literary form (e.g. reference works, textbooks, essays) and treatment (historical periods, geographical factors), and which was applicable to all sciences. Dr. Mann shows how this plan has been developed in compiling subject-catalogues for the institutes of the history of medicine at Frankfurt and at Mainz.

In essence an alphabetically classed catalogue has resulted. The system outlines an initial class on general medicine followed by forty-six classes arranged alphabetically (Anatomie, Augenheilkunde, Bakteriologie, etc.). Each class is subdivided 1 to 100, the first ninety divisions being the same in each class, representing those constant elements in literature, *not* subdivisions of the subject. The remaining ten divisions are for monographs on individual topics in each class, the topics being arranged alphabetically. (This double use of the alphabet permits interpolation of any new class or topic. Further, important topics can be pulled out and made into main classes.) An alphabetical index is provided of all subjects and topics. There is a notation, e.g. Anat. 39, Bakt. 98, which however is quite independent of the order of material on the shelves; a second symbol indicates location. In this way articles from journals and references to works in other libraries can be included. Thus the catalogue becomes a bibliography, facilitating the author's second objective. Both principles and methods deserve careful study and might well be adopted to advantage.

G. F. A. MARMOY

Joseph Lister, the man who made surgery safe, by FREDERICK F. CARTWRIGHT, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson (Educational) Ltd., Pathfinder Biographies, 1963, pp. 128, 13 illus., 10s. 6d.

This admirable short life of Lister, written 'for young people', may be read with pleasure and profit by any serious person. Dr. Cartwright compresses in a small space the story of Lister's career and discoveries, describing examples of his researches and surgical operations. These descriptions are masterpieces of simple explanation. He also draws an attractive sketch of Lister's personality, not glossing over his slight defects of formality and unpunctuality. The book is well illustrated, but Lister's portrait appears only on the wrapper, which nine out of ten readers will throw away. But what *advocatus diaboli* tempted Dr. Cartwright to say that Lister was 'not a clever man and not a very good surgeon'? His whole story contradicts him.

W. R. LE FANU

BOOKS ALSO RECEIVED

BROWN, E. G., *Arabian Medicine*, Cambridge, University Press, 1962, illus., pp. 138, 21s. (\$3.95).

This book gives the text of the Fitzpatrick lectures delivered at the Royal College of Physicians in 1919 and 1920. It has been out of print for some time and is now reissued in this centenary year of the author's birth.

JEVONS, F. R., *The Biochemical Approach to Life*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1963, pp. 184, 28s.

In this book Dr. Jevons presents biochemistry as a fundamental form of biology rather than as a complicated kind of chemistry, with the emphasis on biochemistry as a way of explaining the phenomena of life.