

Book Reviews

still of recent origin, and it is particularly apt that its history should have been undertaken now, when a great deal of the advances which have been made are of recent memory, especially those in cardiac surgery. The tendency in the past has been to omit so much of the interest in the origins of new techniques, until a great deal of time has elapsed since their inception. Dr. Meade has certainly remedied this fault in this instance.

The amount of patience and labour that the compilation of this book has entailed will be appreciated by the thoughtful student, when he reads even the first page, which takes reference back to 3000 years B.C. Dr. Meade has spared no effort to get back to the origins of the subjects under discussion, and there follows, chronologically, the advances in our knowledge of the various pathological lesions and the technique for their treatment. Dr. Meade, by his diligence, has unearthed a great deal of factual knowledge which has been buried in forgotten journals.

The book is conveniently arranged under separate headings conforming to the separate pathological lesions, and at the end of each section is an extensive bibliography. The subject-matter is dealt with in a readable manner, but, as is to be expected, dealing with such a wide subject in the confines of one volume, the text is very compact, and consequently a certain concentration of effort is necessary in following the line of reasoning; the covering of the subject is, however, remarkably complete.

I am certain that those who read this book will not only derive much pleasure, but also a great deal of profit, and the student of this particular branch of surgery will value it also for its comprehensive bibliography.

CLEMENT PRICE THOMAS

Disease and Destiny, a bibliography of medical references to the famous. By the late JUDSON BENNETT GILBERT, with additions and an introduction by GORDON E. MESTLER and a preface by EMERSON CROSBY KELLY. Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1962: pp. 535. £6 10s.

This book is the outcome of the collection over a number of years by the late Dr. J. B. Gilbert of references in literature to the diseases of famous persons; it also includes references to descriptions of disease in many famous authors. It is a unique book which should help inquisitive inquirers towards the solution of two questions. First, to what extent does disease influence or control the destiny of an individual, and secondly how do great writers portray disease in their leading characters? There are, for example, ten pages of references (332 in number) under the heading 'Napoleon the First', and in the second category we find twelve pages, with 355 references, devoted to disease as portrayed in the works of Shakespeare. Under the heading 'Goethe' there are ten pages of references, while the literature devoted to Leonardo da Vinci occupies over six pages.

The breadth and depth of literature from which references are drawn is astonishing. Even minor publications are drawn upon and thereby the value of the work is increased. The entries are made chronologically under each heading. It is disappointing that the scope of the work does not permit the inclusion of persons prominent in the field of medicine or the medical sciences, though room has been made for the inclusion of 'medical truants' and for certain others who attended professionally to the needs of very important persons.

After the death of Dr. Gilbert the work was completed and brought up to date by Dr. Gordon Mestler who has also furnished a useful and explanatory introduction.

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We assume that this reference book will be a necessity for every medical and many general libraries for it provides ready access to information which would otherwise be very difficult or impossible to obtain. In a fairly thorough search we found only one or two typographical errors. The book is well printed in clear type, stoutly and tastefully bound, and of handy size so that it should be a pleasure to handle.

ZACHARY COPE

The Collected Letters of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek. Edited, illustrated and annotated by a Commission of Dutch Scientists. Vol. VI. Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger Ltd., 1961; pp. 12, 425; 34 plates. £8 15s. od.

The great project of publishing the collected letters of the celebrated Dutch microscopist, Leeuwenhoek, was launched as long ago as 1931, largely through the initiative of Dr. A. Schierbeek, whose last editorial work appears in the sixth volume just published. The preceding volumes—the first came out in 1939—have made us familiar with the high standard of scholarship which makes this monumental work an indispensable guide, not only to Leeuwenhoek's life and work, but also to the early history of microscopy and to one of the most eventful and formative periods in the history of modern science. Leeuwenhoek's intimate contacts with the Royal Society and its founders, and the interest which his work aroused in England and among scientists all over Europe give these volumes a more than specialized value. The letters throughout are printed in the original Dutch with English translations facing and with most useful notes. The admirable plates give an excellent idea of the very wide range and the high quality (considering the instrument) of Leeuwenhoek's microscopical work.

F. N. L. P.

The Famous Pathologist, or, The Noble Mountebank. THOMAS ALCOCK and JOHN WILMOT, Earl of Rochester. Ed. V. de Sola Pinto. Nottingham University Miscellany No. 1. Nottingham: Sisson & Parker, 1961, pp. 42: port., front. 5s.

This little book tells of an amusing episode in the life of the famous Earl of Rochester when, some time in 1675–6, he was in trouble at Court and hid himself in the City, where he masqueraded as an Italian quack by the name of Alexander Bendo. He had a bill printed to advertise his skill. In 1687 Rochester's daughter, Lady Ann Baynton, apparently asked her father's former servant Thomas Alcock for a copy of his bill. Alcock had only one, and that almost obliterated, which he kept as a relic and did not wish to lose. He therefore transcribed the text carefully and prefaced it with his own account of what seems to have been a highly successful masquerade, writing it out in a little book which he sent to Lady Baynton. It is this MS. copy which was purchased for the University of Nottingham Library in 1949 and which is edited here by Professor de Sola Pinto. It gives a revealing glimpse of medicine in seventeenth-century England and should not be overlooked by anybody interested in the subject.

F. N. L. P.

Toward the Conquest of Beriberi. ROBERT R. WILLIAMS. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1961; pp. xxii, 338.

Dr. Williams has divided the story he has to tell into three main parts. He deals first with beriberi as a deficiency disease and gives a fascinating account of early inquiries into the aetiology of the condition, and the accumulation over the years of data regarding its effects on the adult and the child. In his preface he says that his book