

Book Reviews

J. M. CHALMERS-HUNT (compiler), *Natural history auctions 1700–1972. A register of sales in the British Isles*, London, Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1976, fo., pp. xii, 189, £12.50.

For those interested in natural history, this is an important book. The collecting of natural history specimens has been popular for centuries and for a variety of reasons. The disposal of the resulting collections by auction has taken place in this country since the late eighteenth century, and nearly 1,600 sales have been conducted. One of the important features of any sale is the catalogue prepared for it, for this may often be the only information we now have of a private collection. This, of course, is true for any type of auctioned material.

Sothebys have had the excellent idea of listing all the sales of natural history items that have taken place in the British Isles. First there are fascinating essays describing the various auctions, of entomological, botanical, ornithological, oological, fossil, mineral and shell specimens, each written by an expert. Thereafter the sales, ranging from 22 March 1710 to 12–15 December 1972, are listed (pp. 57–180). The source of the material, its nature, the auctioneer, and the whereabouts of a catalogue are recorded, with interesting footnotes; there is an index of the names of the collections, the vendors and the collectors.

This volume is, therefore, an invaluable source-book for workers in natural history. Its production is of a high order of excellence, with the thoughtful inclusion of a few blank terminal pages for the owner's notes and additions. Admittedly the labour would be greater, but would that someone could produce a similar record of book auction sales!

CHAUNCEY D. LEAKE (editor), *Percival's medical ethics*, Huntington, N.Y., Krieger, 1975, 8vo, pp. li, 299, illus., \$12.50.

In 1803 Thomas Percival (1740–1804) published his *Medical ethics; or, a code of institutes and precepts, adapted to the professional conduct of physicians and surgeons*, as a guide for his son who at that time was a medical student. It was very thorough and intended for practitioners in hospitals or other medical charities, and in private or general practice. The conduct of physicians towards apothecaries, medico-legal problems, and hospital duties were also discussed. Professor Leake in 1927 edited a historical record of medical ethics and professional customs (see *Lancet*, 1928, ii: 556; *Br. med. J.*, 1928, ii: 984), which included a reprint of Percival's *Code*. A second edition of the book is now presented, with an 'Introduction' by Chester R. Burns, a 'Preface to the second edition' by Dr. Leake, a non-facsimile reprint of the *Code* with extracts from the 'Notes and illustrations' which formed an appendix to the original edition, a bibliography of Percival's writings, appendices containing the Hippocratic Oath, the American Medical Association's Code of ethics, etc., and an index.

At a time when increasing concern with the ethics of medicine is manifest, it is useful to have this reprint. However, the anonymous writer in the *British Medical Journal* review cited above brought forward a number of cogent criticisms, especially relating to professional conduct, and these in part are still valid, but are not referred to by the editors of this second edition.