

## Book Reviews

LYDIE BOULLE, M.D. GRMEK, CATHERINE LUPOVICI, and JANINE SAMION-CONTET, *Laennec. Catalogue des manuscrits scientifiques*, Paris, Masson, 1982, 4to, pp. vi, 316, Fr. 200.00.

The scientific manuscripts of Laennec, among them such important unpublished items as his course in the Collège de France embracing all of medicine, or a book on pathological anatomy, are now distributed in five libraries in three French cities. By far the most important holdings are those in the Nantes University Library, described by Mme L. Boule. They form two-thirds of the catalogue. The second largest holding is found in the Paris Bibliothèque intermédiaire de Médecine (Mme J. Samion-Contet), which represents one-sixth of the catalogue. Every document is listed, localized, and its contents are shortly described. There can be not the slightest doubt about the great importance and usefulness of this catalogue to all those interested in Laennec and the medical history of the period. All the more as it contains three excellent indices (names, subjects, chronology). The catalogue lists also a few manuscripts of his uncle and teacher Guillaume Laennec and his cousins and disciples Mériadec and Ambroise Laennec. It is introduced by Dr M. D. Grmek, whose 1967 catalogue of the Claude Bernard manuscripts served as the model for this catalogue.

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L. SZYFMAN, *Lamarck et son époque*, Paris, Masson, 1982, 8vo, pp. xxiii, 449, Fr. 150.00.

This book has a few virtues, among which are that it includes many long passages taken verbatim from Lamarck's writings, it has several nice plates, the author has recognized the importance of Lamarck's belief in spontaneous generation for the whole of Lamarck's biology, and an entire section has been devoted to Lamarck's "philosophy and scientific methodology". These virtues, unfortunately, are outweighed by the book's failings.

The book contains a wealth of misinformation. William Harvey is said by Szyfman to have been a preformationist, when in fact Harvey was the leading epigenesist of his day. Szyfman says Lamarck *begin* his reclassification of the invertebrates by dividing them into ten classes, but Lamarck's writings show quite clearly that he worked on the invertebrates for fifteen years before the number of classes he distinguished reached ten. Szyfman claims that Darwin did not know Lamarck's writings first hand: Darwin's annotations of his copy of Lamarck's *Philosophie zoologique* indicate, to the contrary, that Darwin read at least some sections of that book more carefully than Szyfman has done. Even on the simplest factual matters, Szyfman is unreliable. For example, the reader learns on page 8 that "Lamarck was only 22 years old when he published in 1766 his first scientific work . . .". The reader is later told (p. 47) that Lamarck's first scientific work was published in 1776 when Lamarck was twenty-three! (Not only is Szyfman inconsistent here, neither of the versions he offers is correct. The scientific memoir in question was published in 1776, but by that time Lamarck was thirty-two.) Szyfman also reports incorrectly the publication date of Lamarck's last work on chemistry and the Republican calendar date of the now-famous inaugural lecture in which Lamarck first set forth his ideas on organic mutability. Other flaws in the book include the disjointed arrangement of the chapters, the extreme sketchiness which some important topics (such as Lamarck's views on the evolution of man) are treated, the appearance of several names in the index without any page numbers attached to them, and the pompous preface supplied by Pierre-P. Grassé, which, though brief, is nonetheless replete with its own supply of historical misconceptions and unreliable assertions.

The fundamental problem with this book is that it is a work of advocacy, not a careful historical analysis. The author's chief goal appears to have been to demonstrate the modernity of Lamarck's thought. Where the author does not stray far from Lamarck's own words, the presentation may be satisfactory, as in the section on Lamarck's view of the nature of life. The section on Lamarck's thoughts on extinction, in contrast, misrepresents Lamarck's position egregiously. Lamarck's ideas on chemistry, according to Szyfman, were up to date after all – his quarrels with Lavoisier were only philosophical. In fact, according to Szyfman, some of Lamarck's comments even foreshadowed the later ideas of Mendeleef. Georges Cuvier, not sur-

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prisingly, figures as the chief villain in Szyfman's story. When Szyfman claims, however, that "the paleontological facts became for [Lamarck] the open book of the development of animate nature which confirmed his theory and constituted an irrefutable argument against . . . Cuvier" (p. 118), this simply betrays Szyfman's ignorance of the state of the fossil record at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The author indicates in the preface that he began the book in 1958 and essentially completed it in 1967. This is easy to believe. There is little evidence to indicate that the author has taken cognizance of work done either in evolutionary biology or in the history of science since then. Thus, for example, in the chapter entitled 'The Lamarckian theory of heredity and contemporary genetics' there is only one reference to a publication after 1967, and that is to a 1971 book by Grassé. To make things worse, Szyfman does not appear to have been historically or scientifically up to date even in 1967. Though this book may please a few French biologists, it is unlikely to impress historians of science in France or elsewhere.

The primary virtue of this book remains its lengthy quotations from Lamarck's own writings. The text in which the quotes are imbedded, however, simply does not do justice to the subject.

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K. DAVID PATTERSON. *Health in Colonial Ghana: disease, medicine, and socio-economic change, 1900–1955*, Waltham, Mass., Crossroads Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. xiv, 187, [no price stated].

The author, Professor of History at the University of North Carolina, addresses this book primarily to historians although hoping that it will also interest professionals in health-related fields. His objectives are "to describe changes in the epidemiological environment confronting Ghanaians between 1900 and 1955; to examine the medical and socio-economic forces which affected the distribution, prevalence, and the severity of particular diseases; and to assess the demographic impact of these diseases." The period covered starts at the time when British rule was asserted over the entire Gold Coast (except for mandated Togo) and ends at the eve of independence. It also covered the two world wars and the depression period of the 1930s.

In the first chapter the major socio-economic changes are discussed in relation to the ways in which these changes influenced human health. For example, the rapid spread of the road and rail network in the early 1920s, although of great economic benefit, encouraged travel and, with this, the spread of disease. The growth of the cocoa industry and of mining, especially gold mining, brought an influx of migrants to the towns with overcrowding in slums and shanty towns and all the accompanying health problems.

The second chapter deals with the development and reception of modern medical services and the reviewer was pleased to see that Professor Patterson found much that was good. True, he criticizes, but his criticisms seem to be fair and well supported by references. Much is said of the efforts of enlightened Governors and Directors of Medical Services, frustrated though these often were by financial stringency. Other dedicated workers, some of them known personally to the reviewer, are also mentioned by name.

In the succeeding four chapters detailed attention is given to the effects of specific diseases including, among many others, malaria, trypanosomiasis, the dysenteries, hookworm, schistosomiasis, tuberculosis, leprosy, venereal diseases, and yaws. The final chapter deals with the demographic consequences and causes of the changing epidemiological situation. Subjects covered include the reliability of census and other statistics, the part played by medical measures and other factors in the huge growth of population, nutrition, malnutrition, and the availability of food, and the gradual growth in living standards. The author concludes: "Progress in Ghana must not be exaggerated. . . . Better food, clothing, housing, education, water, and sanitation were responsible for much of the progress made prior to 1955; poverty and ignorance remain greater barriers to good health than shortages of doctors or clinics."

Forty-one tables are provided at the end of the book but these should be read in conjunction with the text where their limitations and reliability are discussed.

Although there are more than 800 references, this is no mere review but a very readable and