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this comparison is not made here but a comparative study of the two drugs would make a most interesting investigation. One is also reminded of *Rauwolfia* from Ancient India which turned out to have a hypotensive action. The author has written a very interesting and useful book, but it is a pity that the documentation is rather limited.

HANS FLÜCK, *Medicinal plants*, translated by J. M. Rowson, London, W. Foulsham, 1976, 8vo, pp. 188, illus., £2.95.

F. MITTON and V. MITTON, *Mitton's practical modern herbal*, London, W. Foulsham, 1976, 8vo, pp. 134, illus., £2.95.

There has of late been a resurgence of interest in "natural" methods of medication by diet and herbs, and no doubt these books are products of it. Each lists herbal remedies and the first describes each plant in turn alphabetically, with information on its appearance, the parts used, habitat and collection, constituents and actions, and usage. It also has a brief section on ailments and their treatment. The second is much the same, but with less information on the herbs themselves, and more errors.

The historian of medicine will be interested in comparing the herbal remedies suggested here with very similar therapy practised millennia ago. Without doubt some of them have pharmacological actions, but it is always dangerous to encourage the layman to treat himself and so obscure or delay the recognition of diseases successfully treatable only by modern means.

OLIVER W. SACKS, *Awakenings*, Harmondsworth, Middx., Penguin Books, 1976, 8vo, pp. 344, illus., £1.00 (paperback).

The author is a neurologist and he describes the victims of encephalitis lethargica who survived this disease fifty years ago and now, through the agency of a new drug L-Dopa, have "awakened". After an introduction he gives a series of twenty extended case histories of his patients, followed by essays on perspectives, awakening, tribulation and accommodation. Throughout, he writes with great sensitivity and subtlety concerning the patient as well as his specific disease, and the accounts of the patients are brilliant depictions.

First published in 1973, the present edition has additional material in the form of footnotes. This includes further clinical observations and reflections which together constitute a third of the book. The basic structure of the book is therefore undisturbed. The first edition was greeted enthusiastically and this one adds to the original qualities. It is a moving contribution to the history of a devastating epidemic, a tragic aftermath, and of a remarkable drug. In addition to Dr. Sacks' concern with a particular disease he also writes shrewdly on disease as a process so that this book will also be of value to historians of other disorders, as well as to clinicians.

RICHARD SAUNDERS, *Poor Richard; the almanacks for the years 1733-1758 . . .*, New York and London, Paddington Press, 1976, 4to, pp. xiii, 300, illus., £7.95.

Of Benjamin Franklin's multifarious publications none was more popular than his classic of American letters, *Poor Richard's almanacks*. In colonial America they had a wide readership, as was also the case in France. They were full of useful information, much like the many other almanacks available then and still published today. The

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health rules are reminiscent of the *Regimen sanitatis Salerni*. Some of the material was borrowed, such as proverbs from Dryden, Pope, La Rochefoucauld and Rabelais. Franklin continually added and revised, and some of his statements found their way into common American parlance. The last number (1758) contained a series of adages entitled 'The way to wealth' and this appeared even in Chinese, Russian and Welsh.

As a reflection of the popular needs of mid-eighteenth-century America, Britain and France, Franklin's almanacks are important social documents of general and particular knowledge. Their reproduction in the present form, which first appeared in 1964, is, therefore, welcome, although the much-acclaimed coloured plates in this edition are not especially attractive.

IAN B. COWAN and DAVID E. EASSON, *Medieval religious houses in Scotland with an appendix on the houses in the Isle of Man*, 2nd ed., London, Longman, 1976, 8vo, pp. xxviii, 246, 3 11., four maps, [no price stated].

The first edition of this excellent book appeared in 1957. The second is not, however, a mere reprint with corrections, for the surviving author, Dr. Cowan of Glasgow, has included a good deal of additional material and has thoroughly revised throughout. It now provides the scholar with an even more comprehensive survey of Scottish religious foundations from the introduction of Christianity to 1560.

After essays on the historiography of the subject and 'The development of monasticism in Scotland', the rest of the book comprises lists of the houses divided by orders, and with a mass of information about each, fully documented. There is a brief section on 'The Knights Hospitallers' (pp. 160–161) and a longer one on 'Hospitals' (pp. 162–200) which lists all known institutions taking care of the poor and sick, the traveller, etc. The monastic establishments, also listed, are of equal importance to the historian of medicine in view of the role of the church in medieval medicine.

This scholarly work can, like its predecessor, be strongly recommended with confidence to a wide circle of interested scholars. It will remain an authoritative treatise for some time to come.

GEORGE F. HOURANI (editor), *Essays on Islamic philosophy and science*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. viii, 261, \$30.00.

The twenty-two papers in this collection were presented at conferences in the State of New York in 1970 and 1971. They deal with many aspects of thought in medieval Islam, ranging in time from the eighth to the seventeenth century A.D. when classical concepts of the Middle Ages were still adhered to. Each paper is a scholarly contribution with copious documentation and each has been written by an expert in his field. In the history of science and medicine there are at least four of relevance: the late G. E. von Grunebaum on 'Relation of philosophy and science: a general view'; A. Z. Iskandar on 'The medical biography of Al-Rāzī'; the late M. Levey on 'Methodology and the history of science'; F. Rahman on 'The eternity of the world and the heavenly bodies'. Others, however, more philosophical in content should also be of interest, and they will provide depth to our understanding of Arabic science and medicine. The book can be warmly recommended, despite the fact that it is several years out of date.