

Book Reviews

KENNETH GREGORY (editor), *The first cuckoo. A selection of the most witty amusing and memorable letters to The Times 1900–1975*, London, Times Books/Allen & Unwin, 1976, 8vo, pp. 350, £4.50.

The correspondence columns of *The Times* have for many decades been the barometer of public opinion, the sounding board for polemics, the tocsin for warnings and protests, the disseminator of useful, and sometimes useless, information, the rallying point for worthy, worthless and lost causes, a method of announcing records, of denouncing the short-comings of others, and of stimulating amusing banter, together with other laudable functions. This collection contains some 250 letters mainly from the eminent and the topics covered are as various as the correspondents. There are frequent brief editorial notes and good indexes.

For those concerned with the history of medicine or science the benefits derived from this anthology are biographical and factual. Thus there are letters from Conan Doyle, Lord Horder, Julian Huxley, Ray Lankester, Lord Moynihan, Dr. William Sargent, Professor E. P. Sharpey-Schafer, Marie Stopes, Sir Henry Tizard, and from others more peripherally involved with medicine or science. Relevant topics are: cruelty to animals, mosquito deterrent, birthrate, brain versus computer, butterflies, the cuckoo, Darwin, fainting, food, leeches, anti-Semitism in medicine, Newton, infant deaths, Pavlovian psychology, population, skeletons, smoking, spectacles, and many more, especially concerning natural history. The book is, therefore, a useful source of information as well as a delightful bed-side volume.

NANCY STEPAN, *Beginnings of Brazilian science. Oswaldo Cruz, medical research and policy, 1890–1920*, New York, Science History Publications, 1976, 8vo, pp. xi, 225, illus., \$12.95.

It is never clear why certain historians with no exposure to medical practice persistently work with topics that demand just this kind of experience. Mrs. Stepan's book deals mainly with the development of medicine in Brazil, and although the author has read widely, there is evidence of her lack of medical knowledge and occasionally of the history of medicine.

She discusses science in Brazil before the nineteenth century, and then medicine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her study centres on Oswaldo Cruz (1872–1917) and his Institute in Rio de Janeiro, founded in 1900. Here pioneer research was carried out on yellow fever and plague, and the reasons for its success and viability are considered. Cruz, however, also strove to nationalize experimental medicine and his Institute, claimed as the greatest scientific centre in Brazil, contributed brilliantly to the endeavour. Its supply of scientific manpower, its promotion of government interest in sanitation and the efficient use of foreign scientists and technical aid contributed to Cruz's achievements. There is also a chapter here on the general problem of science in a developing country.

This book has been extensively researched and previously untapped sources used; there is meticulous documentation and a selected bibliography. It should be of interest to historians of nineteenth-century medicine, who, on the whole, tend to concentrate on Europe and the United States. Reference to the advancement of medicine in developing countries should provide an extra dimension.