

Book Reviews

sight, disguise the originality of his work. This is an indispensable and inexpensive source for anyone interested in the history of obstetric care. Cost may prohibit such a plan, but the present modest version suggests that an expanded edition, with illustrations, would be well worth while.

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CHARLES TRUAX, *The mechanics of surgery, comprising detailed descriptions, illustrations and lists of instruments, appliances and furniture necessary in modern surgical art* (1899), with an Introduction by James M. Edmonson, Norman Surgery Series, No. 1, San Francisco, Norman Publishing, 1988, 8vo, pp. xliii, 1024, illus., \$145.00.

This reprinted reference book is much more than Chicago-based Truax Green & Co.'s surgical instrument catalogue for 1899 (prices are not given). It starts with a brief history of the evolution of surgical instruments and proceeds to describe their manufacture and their care. Thereafter the book follows the familiar modern instrument catalogue format, but with better illustrations, and notes of the instruments' use. Because Truax Green & Co. both manufactured and imported (from Europe) the book shows a cross section of almost all the instruments in world use at the end of the nineteenth century. The lists of instruments required for each set-piece operation would have made the original invaluable to the theatre sister or scrub-nurse of the time. Today's theatre sisters would enjoy and learn from it, but its great value today is to those who collect surgical instruments or who curate collections.

Dr Edmonson is the Curator of the Dittrick Museum of Medical History in Cleveland, and his introduction to Truax's magnum opus is wide-reaching and well documented. He defines the practical difficulties which Truax overcame and points out (p. ix) that currently

The most obvious and universal use of Truax's work will be in accurate identification and proper naming of instruments, which continue to challenge even the most knowledgeable of collectors. It is worth noting that many forms of surgical instruments enjoyed remarkable longevity, remaining in vogue from the early nineteenth century well into the twentieth. Truax's identifications and nomenclature are thus applicable to instruments from a far greater time span than one might at first suspect. *The Mechanics of Surgery* is a standard reference for both pre- and post-aseptic-era instruments, and, therefore, is of considerable value to collectors who focus on medical and surgical artifacts of the pre-aseptic period which ended around 1885–90.

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AUDREY DAVIS and MARK DREYFUSS, *The finest instruments ever made: a bibliography of medical, dental, optical and pharmaceutical company trade literature, 1700–1939*, Arlington, MA, Medical History Publishing Associates I, 1986, 8vo, pp. iv, 448, illus., [no price stated].

Despite its subtitle, this book is in fact a guide to only some of the medical trade literature held in 56 libraries or collections, rather than a complete bibliography of the field. The emphasis is firmly on North American sources—49 institutions in the United States and Canada have been surveyed, but only five British, one Australian, and one European (Zurich Medical Museum and Library).

Selectivity is unavoidable in such a large and relatively unresearched area, but the authors have made their task harder by including the makers of such disparate goods as laboratory glassware, pharmaceuticals, microscopes and hospital furnishings, as well as instruments *per se*. For none of the categories can the bibliographic listings be regarded as anything more than partial, and hence the book must be used with caution. As the authors themselves point out, the absence of entries for particular manufacturers or catalogue editions may mean only that they were not represented in the institutions searched (and some of these libraries apparently held