

Book Reviews

MICHAEL ALEXANDER, *Omai "noble savage"*, London, Collins & Harvill, 1977, 8vo, pp. 223, illus., £5.95.

The "noble savage" was mostly a creation of Rousseau, and in order to examine his thesis that the ideal man must be one uncontaminated by learning and culture a number of Tahitian natives were brought to Europe. Omai reached Britain in 1774 and proved to be a genteel, sensitive, and intelligent person who mixed in high society and was even accepted by Dr. Johnson who rejected Rousseau's theory. The story of his two-year stay in Britain is told here in detail, unfortunately with very limited documentation. It not only records the reactions of society to a primitive man, but in so doing illuminates a less well-known aspect of eighteenth-century life. In fact Omai was a step ahead of the people he mixed with, for the author claims that throughout his visit he was planning to use the British in order to avenge his family's dispossession in Tahiti.

Sir Joseph Banks, one of Omai's patrons and protectors, Dr. Carl Solander, and other scientists saw him, and their comments are mostly recorded here. It would be of great interest, however, to investigate further the scientific and medical aspects of Omai's sojourn in Britain.

LAWRENCE DULAKE, *The doctor's tale 1662-1975. Reigate and Redhill*, Redhill, [the author], 1976, 8vo, pp. iv, 153, illus., [no price stated].

British medicine has in the past been dominated by the metropolitan Colleges, and this in part explains the paucity of provincial medical history, a situation which does not exist in most Continental countries. Dr. Dulake has spent many years of labour on his book which has two titles. The one above is on the cover, but the one on the title-page defines its contents more precisely: *Doctors, practices and hospitals through 300 years. A history of general and hospital practice at Reigate and Redhill including Earlswood and Merstham*. It is based on his own experience of medicine in the area since 1925. He confesses that it is a home-made book and for this he deserves praise in addition to that due him for having investigated the medical history of a small part of provincial Britain. It is a pity that other local practitioners do not have the same interest and industry to produce similar volumes, for if they did these would help to provide the foundations for a true history of British medicine.

G. B. HINDLE, *Provision for the relief of the poor in Manchester 1754-1826*, Manchester University Press for the Chetham Society, 1975, 8vo, pp. viii, 192, illus., £7.20.

The period under survey begins with the building of a "Paupers' Workhouse" and ends with the Charity Commissioners' Report on Lancashire. It is concerned more with voluntary rather than with statutory relief, although both are discussed against the background of life in Manchester. In the section on statutory provision there is a good account of life in a "Paupers' Workhouse" and of attacks by individuals on the widespread abuses of the Poor Law. The voluntary activities and sources of funds and how they were raised are described in the sections on provision, voluntary and on bequest, but whether this was the foundation of our modern welfare state is one of the author's contestable conclusions. Nevertheless, he has provided a useful addition to the history of provincial provision for the poor.