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century Gouda Guild of Surgeons of the pentagram as a motif on their possessions (e.g., on a seal, furniture and glassware) which can still be seen in the *Het Catharina-Gasthuis* municipal museum, Gouda.

Though now generally forgotten as a symbol, Schouten demonstrates that the pentagram was fairly well known in the seventeenth-century world of learning. He traces the pentagram as a Pythagorean emblem of health, and its later use as a talisman to ward off misfortune (evidenced by its appearance on cradles and bedsteads). In more recent times the pentagram has become fairly widely used in arms and such ephemera as inn signs.

More germane to his theme is Schouten's information on the pentagram as a medical symbol, indicating that in the Renaissance the Pythagorean symbol of health reappeared, sometimes depicted in association with the urinal and the serpent-wreathed staff.

This is a stimulating book with a valuable collection of forty-one illustrations. Schouten, however, is handicapped by the lack of literary information, and one is left wondering whether interpretations of the use of the pentagram on certain objects requires more caution. (There also seems to be some confusion between hexagrams and pentagrams.) A reading of the book might bias one to believe that all pentagrams on medical objects reflect a medical or pharmaceutical usage, but on one seventeenth-century English bell-metal mortar known to the reviewer, the pentagram is undoubtedly a merchant's mark.

J. K. CRELLIN

The Rays: A History of Radiology in the United States and Canada, by RUTH and EDWARD BRECHER, Baltimore, Williams & Wilkins; Edinburgh and London, E. & S. Livingstone, 1969, pp. xix, 484, illus., £8.

The origins of radiology, unlike those of many branches of medicine are not lost in the mists of antiquity but copiously recorded in a wide range of journals. The authors have searched these diligently, and accomplished, within the limits imposed, the declared aim of producing 'a readable as well as authoritative . . . history of radiology in North America'.

The actual writers worked with the advice of a committee appointed by the American College of Radiology. Their final fling with the title and such chapter headings as 'With Death in Their Fingertips' should not put off the serious reader. The amazingly rapid developments in the early years of radiology are described in considerable detail, and later advances in outline. The geographical limitation does not prevent brief descriptions of European discoveries whenever these triggered off American work. Failure to mention the rotating anode, however, is a notable omission.

The writers deal with radiation technology and its diagnostic and therapeutic applications, explaining medical terms whenever understanding of these is essential to the narrative, but make no attempt to elucidate the physics of the gas tube or later equipment: such unfortunate phrases as 'a current of 30,000 volts' and 'a [X-ray] tube of higher capacity' make clear their wisdom in not venturing further. They have reversed the roles of retinal rods and cones in night vision.

Americanisms such as 'through' for 'to' are perhaps inevitable, but no one should

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accept 'alternate' as an alternative for 'alternative'. 'X-ray' serves as a verb, an adjective, and a noun in two senses. For one of these 'radiograph' should be used, and 'film' or 'plate' for its repetition.

The line drawings are usefully chosen and placed to assist the text, but the plates are inconveniently grouped. Most of the plates are interesting photographs of historic events and equipment. The few which depict modern radiographs are superfluous, or for the non-medical reader inadequate: faithful copies of some early radiographs would have been more valuable.

Numerous references at the end of each chapter, and some embedded in the text, give a good start to anyone wishing to enquire further. There is an Index of Persons with over 600 entries.

Few radiologists will buy this book with their own money, though many might be glad to be given it. It should be on the shelves of every medical and scientific library with a historical section. We should be grateful to the Mallinckrodt Co. for making possible this tribute to the pioneers of our art.

A. B. PARTRIDGE

Bibliotheca Osleriana: a Catalogue of Books illustrating the History of Medicine and Science collected, arranged, and annotated by Sir William Osler, Bt. and bequeathed to McGill University, Montreal and London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1969, pp. xli, 792, £29.25.

This is a reprint of the famous catalogue of Sir William Osler's bequest to McGill University, first published at Oxford by the Clarendon Press in 1929. The original text is reproduced in full with the addition of a prologue by Professor Lloyd G. Stevenson and six pages of addenda and corrigenda.

In his elegant prologue Professor Stevenson is at pains to point out that '*Bibliotheca Osleriana* remains a useful, reliable and delightful guide'. Its reliability from a technical point of view is not in doubt. The work of W. W. Francis and his associates is a model of editorial precision and care. Forty years have revealed a comparatively small number of errors and omissions, many of them trivial. Again, the book will always have interest as an attractive and personal record of Osler's enthusiastic pursuit of medical history and book collecting. It is the question of the *Bibliotheca's* continuing value as a work of reference which raises some doubts as to the wisdom of this very expensive reissue.

In judging the value of the reprint it is important to keep in mind that its arrangement and contents were the result of Osler's dominating interest in great men and important books. Perhaps as an inevitable consequence of his scientific and medical training, he saw the history of medicine as an evolutionary, almost organic, process. From primitive beginnings medicine had been shaped and adapted ever closer to the ideal of biological and clinical truth, by the accumulation of facts and valid observations and the discarding of superstition and error. Each century in great or lesser degree made its contribution through the life and work of men who stood out from their contemporaries by virtue of the shared factor of scientific genius. His point of reference was always the modern state of the art, and there is a sense in which Osler was interested not so much in the history of medicine, as in tracing what he conceived to be the antecedents of modern medical science.