

their holdings of multiple copies. A handful of later lists are included, the most substantial from the seventeenth century being that of John Nidd, dated 1659, with a high proportion of medical books. Where the books were bequeathed to College libraries, as Nidd's were to Trinity and Andrew Perne's to Peterhouse, those still to be found on the College shelves have been identified. The owners form a cross-section of the academic community from the Masters of Colleges to their butlers and cooks, and the collections range from large libraries such as that of Thomas Lorkin, the Regius Professor of Physic, for example, illustrating his acquisition of the latest continental publications and acquaintance with the works of Paracelsus, to the few books of Alice Edwards, widow of David, MD, described as living "comfortably, if untidily (a battledore and a rolling pin were found among her linen)". Such light touches enliven the introductions to individual inventories in which Dr Leedham-Green provides brief biographies and often summarizes the other goods represented in the inventories. Relevant artefacts, such as maps, pictures, and instruments, are included in the transcripts, and this generous practice extends to the entire medical equipment of the "shop" of Robert Pickering, MD (1551), which is, however, omitted from the index of instruments in volume 2.

The difficulties of identifying books, not to mention editions, from entries in inventories, often highly abbreviated and written down from dictation, are notorious, and Dr Leedham-Green has been conspicuously successful. In the second volume, which doubles the price, but possibly not the usefulness, of this work, there is a thorough author-title index with references to Adams, STC, and other bibliographies and catalogues. The valuations of the copies are repeated here and provide matter for speculation, although representing the estimates of the appraisers rather than the books' actual prices; does the variation in price of Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica* from 7s. in 1589 to 13s.4d. two years later reflect the condition of the copies? The author-title index is supplemented by a curious classified list of authors in an arrangement derived from Gesner's *Pandectae*. A guide directly to the subject coverage of the individual lists, however rough, would have been a great advantage, as would an alphabetical index of the owners (they are listed by date of death, in order of matriculation, and by college affiliation). The final production of this monumental labour of fourteen years was facilitated by the computer, evidently one with an inbuilt imp (see the instruction to log-off at the end of the list on page 2 of volume 1) and the standard of reproduction of the text is no more than adequate given the price of these volumes. However, their value to students of Cambridge academic life, of the history of the booktrade and libraries, and of much else, will ensure that they are well-used.

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JANE M. OPPENHEIMER (editor), *Autobiography of Dr Karl Ernst von Baer*, Canton, Mass., Science History Publications, 1987, 8vo, pp. xiv, 389, front., \$25.00.

Each field has its heroes, workers whose vital contributions were recognized in their own lifetime and whose reputations survive the vicissitudes of passing fashion in scientific research. Karl Ernst von Baer, who laid the foundations of the science of embryology, was such a hero. He was a superb technician, who set a high standard for subsequent research, and the fruits of his skill included a detailed description of chick development, and the discoveries of the notochord and mammalian ovum. He developed comparative embryology, with the laudable, if impossible, aim of following "... the development of all the larger groups of the animal kingdom". Von Baer found it impossible "... to merely recount the observed happenings without developing some views and opinions of a more general nature", and here were made his greatest contributions. He saw that the germ layers recognized by Pander in the chick embryo were an integral part of all vertebrate development, and he replaced the early recapitulation theory of Serres and Meckel with his own "laws". T. H. Huxley said of von Baer's theorizing that it embodied "... the deepest and soundest philosophy of zoology, and indeed of biology generally, which has yet been given to the world". The publication of this English translation of von Baer's autobiography enables us to learn something of the life of this remarkable scientist, and it is an exception to Medawar's dictum

that “the lives of scientists, considered as Lives, almost always make dull reading”. It is an entertaining and idiosyncratic work that, as Jane Oppenheimer, its editor, remarks, rambles and repeats itself, and minor points set off digressions that assume epic proportions.

The autobiography covers the period between his earliest memories (about 1797) to 1864, and deals in depth with his education, scientific studies, his professional life as an academic, and his travels. I was constantly struck by how remote this period is; for example, when von Baer talks of tending wounded soldiers when Napoleon invaded Russia, or that he completed much of his research before the Cell Theory, or that spontaneous generation was an accepted form of reproduction. Von Baer gives much background on his embryological and zoological studies, but the section dealing with his travels is surprising. Like T. H. Huxley, von Baer undertook a variety of commissions for the government, particularly studying fishing practices. He appends an extensive bibliography in which he expounds on various controversies and attempts to set the record straight. He would have been a remarkable man in any age and some of his views seem very “modern”. On education, he writes “. . . the desire to learn is infinitely more productive than irksome coercion and that where desire is lacking very little is achieved, and whatever is accomplished is soon lost again.” On the problem of authority in science, he wrote of Haller: “. . . a man with such a prodigious output might possibly not be careful enough in his research, nobody seemed to have dared to imagine”.

This is a fascinating autobiography that should interest everyone concerned with this period. It is unfortunate that the production is not of higher quality. There are missing lines, misspellings, and mis-bindings in the review copy.

J. A. Witkowski

CHARLES TURNER THACKRAH, *The effects of arts, trades and professions on health and longevity*, 1832; together with A. Meiklejohn, *The life, work and times of Charles Turner Thackrah* (1957); reprinted with a new preface by Saul Benison, Canton, Mass., Science History Publications, 1985, 8vo, pp. xiv, 217, illus., \$15.00.

C. T. Thackrah was a Leeds surgeon who, in 1831, published a short text on occupational health and disease, “with particular reference to the Trades and Manufactures of Leeds: and [with] suggestions for the removal of many of the agents, which produce disease, and shorten the duration of life.” The work was topical and successful. It was republished in America and in a second, enlarged, English edition which has remained a classic of industrial medicine. In 1957, Dr A. Meiklejohn, a noted practitioner and historian in that field, published a reprint of the 1832 version together with a very useful biographical study of Thackrah. It is Meiklejohn’s edition which has now been further reprinted by Science History Publications. The new preface is very brief, but it is good to have the 1957 work available again for purchase.

Since 1957, the social history of English medicine has developed considerably; we know the outlines of medical politics in the provinces for the period of Thackrah’s text. It fits into a context of nascent, often rival, medical schools, and of local medical societies, some of whose members would support the early Provincial Medical and Surgical Association. Together with this medical “socialization” came publications meant to establish the intellectual status of individuals, towns, and the provinces in general.

Manchester and Sheffield are now better known than Leeds, which would repay more local study, moving outwards from Meiklejohn’s work. Wool towns were different from cotton towns, as attitudes to factory acts demonstrated, and the strong tory faction among Leeds surgeons is particularly noteworthy — a major caution against sloppy interpretation of “bourgeois medical reform”. There is still much to be learned about the complex knot of socio-medical politics that surfaced around 1831 — not just cholera and dissection, but puerperal fever, debates on charity, population, work, urbanization; on the success or failure of the industrial system.

Here Thackrah’s text is central but oblique. His work became a staple of debates over the conditions of the working classes, but it is not fully of the “urban studies” genre founded by J. P. Kay. Rather, it stands in a more natural-historical tradition which explored particular