

## Book Reviews

important contributions made to British rheumatology by the Medical Research Council.

As with so many well-meant volumes of this sort, the book becomes more than a trifle self-congratulatory. I have no doubt that in this country the Heberden Society was a much-needed stimulus to the development of a group of professional rheumatologists, for whom the Society provided self-respect at a time when their speciality was held in low regard by such established disciplines as neurology or cardiology. Yet I would like, also, to have been told something of the undoubted scientific achievements of the distinguished members of the Heberden Society who represent the best in British rheumatology. Too often I am beset by a nagging doubt as to what through all these years has really been achieved for the sick and the suffering.

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JOHN H. APPLEBY, *A selective index to Siberian, Far Eastern, and Central Asian Russian materia medica*, Research Publications of the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, Oxford, No. VIII, Oxford, Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine (45–47 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PF, UK), 1987, 4to, pp. viii, 48, £4.50 (paperback).

For the past ten years Dr Appleby has been ploughing a rather lone but valuable furrow, laying bare the two-way traffic in medical knowledge that took place between Britain and Russia in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From the seeds sown in that work has now sprung this bibliographical guide to modern research on Russian materia medica, which the Wellcome Unit of Oxford has performed a general service by publishing.

The coverage is avowedly highly selective and limited to thirty-seven items: twenty-four plant species, eight medicines of animal origin, and the remainder mineral substances. A few entries are very brief, in view of the fact that these items have been covered adequately elsewhere; the rest extend to a short description of the species or substance in question, together with a note of its habitat and geographical distribution, an account of its pharmacology, and details of its uses. These last are keyed to references to literature listed in full in an appendix; in three cases (*Eleutherococcus*, ginseng and kumis) the keys are broken down under twenty or more headings. Bibliographies in the body of the text are supplied for items which have been written about more extensively.

An introduction places the subject in historical context by listing the principal eighteenth-century expeditions which laid the basis of scientific knowledge of the indigenous therapeutic resources; outlining the intensive efforts which the modern Soviet state, building on the Chinese concept of prophylaxis, has latterly put into systematically investigating these; and drawing attention to the potential value of this body of experience to the West.

It must have been a testing booklet to produce, yet appears to have emerged free of slips. Specialists in materia medica and pharmacology will surely find it a useful addition to their shelves.

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JENNIFER J. CARTER and JOAN H. PITTOCK (editors), *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*, Aberdeen University Press, 1987, 8vo, pp. x, 438, illus., £14.90 (paperback).

Scottish Enlightenment studies have long orbited around Edinburgh where, at least for some part of their lives, practically all the first-division literati and moralists lived. Indeed, a number of authors have gone so far as to identify the Scottish Enlightenment with Edinburgh itself and, perhaps following Peter Gay, others have localized the movement to a few magisterial Scottish thinkers. This collection of essays is a counterblast to this view, as well as a plea to take seriously the claim that Aberdeen was an important focus of Enlightenment culture. The papers were originally delivered at a conference and are now published as forty-three contributions