

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

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(including an introduction) with footnotes, in over four hundred pages. The limitations of this approach are obvious. Too many of the papers are too short, or superficial. Worse, there is far too much repetition. There are, for instance, several papers on Ossian, all of which recite the background to the “discovery” of the poems; and biographical repetition, notably with regard to James Beattie. A little editorial pruning in some places, and encouragement of authors to expand in others, could have made this work an important collection of scholarly essays and not simply the record of a conference.

All that said, there is much in this volume to be welcomed, and the editors are to be congratulated in getting together a number of important papers on north-east Scottish affairs. The volume starts with a polemical piece by Donald Withrington, denouncing the Edinburgh-centred preoccupation of Scottish Enlightenment studies. The attack is well delivered, although presumably shortage of space precludes Withrington from developing in any great detail the reasons why other areas qualify for membership of the Enlightenment, rather than why scholars have usually behaved as if they should not. A revisionist position is also adopted by Anand Chitnis, this time in attacking the authors who identify the Union of 1707 as a fence dividing dark from light. Chitnis lays particular stress on the economic and cultural changes of the late seventeenth century as the precursors of eighteenth-century events. However, here again it would have been useful to have had the argument at more length, since in its present form it almost totally ignores the indisputable changes in patronage relations created by the Union.

Almost every other essay in the volume is devoted to some much narrower topic. Alexander Gerard, George Campbell and James Beattie crop up frequently. There is an intriguing (but again too condensed) statistical study of the Aberdeen professoriate by Roger Emerson, and a nice account of the extramural science classes of Patrick Copland, by John S. Reid. There is also an excellent study of Macpherson (of Ossian fame) as an intriguer in Indian affairs, by George McElroy. There are a number of other finely-turned pieces, notably on painting and bibliography. Sadly, only in the back-cover blurb (not even in the index) is there a mention of John Gregory, cousin of Thomas Reid and probably Aberdeen’s most famous physician before he moved to Edinburgh in 1764.

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JAY SCHLEICHKORN, *“The Sometime Physician”, William John Little—Pioneer in Treatment of Cerebral Palsy and Orthopedic Surgery (1810–1894)*, Farmingdale, NY, The Author, 1987, 8vo, pp. xiii, 199, illus., \$18.95 (hard cover), \$14.00 (paperback), plus postage and packing \$2.00 (U.S.), \$5.00 (overseas) from Jay Schleichkorn, Ph.D., 39 Regina Road, Farmingdale NY 11735.

This important and valuable book was inspired by Dr Schleichkorn’s determination to bring to modern readers an appreciation of Little, one of the great figures in the development of pediatrics and of orthopaedics in the classical sense. He has read and travelled widely, written perceptively, and fulfilled his purpose. As a patient and pupil of Stromeyer, Little brought the master’s teaching to a wide audience, and emphasized one of the great principles in the correction of deformity: the removal or mitigation of a deforming force, even though the active part of treatment, by tendon transfer, was not then available. The author’s decision to publish the whole of Little’s great paper to the Obstetrical Society of London, of 1861, was well made. ‘On the influence of abnormal parturition, difficult labours, premature birth, and asphyxia neonatorum on the mental and physical condition of the child, especially in relation to deformities’ is a landmark in pediatrics and orthopaedics.

Although cerebral palsy has with some reason been called “Little’s Disease”, Little made other important contributions to orthopaedics. He recognized the rotational element in scoliosis, and liberated many young patients from heavy and cumbersome spinal braces.

One wonders what the “spinal paralysis” was which afflicted Mrs Little for nineteen years before her death, of which her husband would have been an astute observer. Achilles tenotomy or lengthening has a place in the treatment of talipes equino-varus, but there are many other