

Book Reviews

of anatomical specimens, housed in his Museum in Leicester Square and guarded by young William Clift. Matthew Baillie and Everard Home, the executors of Hunter's Will, enlisted the help of Lord Auckland and Sir Joseph Banks (the President of the Royal Society), and by their influence a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed and the result was that the Government granted £15,000 to purchase the Collection for the Nation, and the newly constituted College of Surgeons was asked to take charge of the Collection under certain conditions. One of the conditions was that thirty Trustees should be appointed 'who are to take care that the Corporation of Surgeons perform their Engagements respecting the said Collection.'

Fourteen of the Trustees were to be appointed by the Lords of the Treasury in the first instance and thereafter by the Trustees themselves, but sixteen were chosen by virtue of their Offices which were respectively: The Lord Chancellor, The First Lord of the Treasury, The Chancellor of the Exchequer, The First Lord of the Admiralty, The Speaker of the House of Commons, The Secretary of War, The President of the Royal Society, The President of the Royal College of Physicians, The four Censors of the Royal College of Physicians, The Regius Professor of Medicine in the University of Oxford, The Reader in Anatomy in the University of Oxford, The Regius Professor of Physic in the University of Cambridge, and the Professor of Anatomy in the University of Cambridge.

It will be seen that the Trustees of the Hunterian Collection have through one hundred and fifty years constituted a very distinguished body of men, statesmen, lawyers, doctors, clerics, and scientists of every kind, and well worthy of historical remembrance. It is altogether fitting that this History should be written by Sir Victor Negus, who is not only the present Chairman of the Trustees, but has himself prepared and presented to the Museum one of its most recent and valuable collections.

For the greater part of the past one and a half centuries the Trustees have held a watching brief, only interfering when some special crisis occurred, but they performed vital duties during the first few decades of the Museum's history, and again during the last twenty-five years they have been of incalculable help in re-constituting the Museum after the destructive effects of the bombing during the 1939–45 War. Sir Victor, using the records as his guide, has traced the whole course of the history of the Trustees' work, culminating in the brilliant ceremony of the opening of the magnificent new Museum on Friday 17 May 1963 when Mr. Harold Macmillan, the Prime Minister, declared the Museum open.

Brief biographies of all the Trustees are appended and the book ends with a chronological table of the chief events from 1793 to the present day. The book is well printed and tastefully produced.

ZACHARY COPE

Joseph Priestley, Adventurer in Science and Champion of Truth, by F. W. GIBBS (British Men of Science Series), London and Edinburgh, Nelson, 1965, pp. xxii, 258, illus., 42s.

Dr. Gibbs has given a splendid account of the activities of Priestley (1733–1804) who was undoubtedly one of the most significant men in the changing world of the late eighteenth century. By placing Priestley's manifold activities against a detailed back-

Book Reviews

ground of his life (over 250 names of his contemporaries appear in the text), Gibbs also provides a valuable document of the eighteenth century scene and, at the same time, produces an excellent companion volume to R. E. Schofield's *The Lunar Society of Birmingham* (1963).

That science never for long took first place in Priestley's life is correctly stressed. Full justice is done, for instance, to his important role as an educationist and as an outspoken Dissenter who aroused the anger of the Establishment. It was, of course, Priestley's religious and political activities that led to his emigration to America during 1794. It was a strange trick of fate that while he was at sea the other leading figure of eighteenth-century chemistry, Lavoisier, was guillotined (8 May).

Much of the book is naturally concerned with Priestley's celebrated work on gases although his importance to the history of electricity is adequately detailed. Many of Priestley's experiments on air and on individual gases are described using his own nomenclature but, despite the numerous complex terms, clarity is always maintained. One of the most important features of the book is that it reveals why Priestley, in spite of his continuous allegiance to the phlogiston theory, was such a tremendous influence on chemistry by stimulating others to experiment, and, in the cases of Henry and Dalton for instance, to develop theoretical ideas.

Many of Priestley's activities are of direct interest to the medical and pharmaceutical historian. For example, his part in the introduction of electrical machines into medicine; his apparatus for the production of soda water (initially considered to be a cure for scurvy); his views on the possible medicinal value of oxygen and his influence on the therapeutic use of gases (notably Beddoes' celebrated Pneumatic Institution at Bristol); his activities behind the introduction of wedgwood mortars; and his associations with Benjamin Rush.

Unfortunately many detailed aspects of Priestley's work have not been elaborated or mentioned, but this is obviously because the book had to stay within the size and scope of the series for which it was written. For the same reason Gibbs has not been able to give complete documentation or to explore many of the questions he raises in the reader's mind, such as the influence of Priestley's scientific activities on his religious outlook. Unhappily, Dr. Gibbs' premature death, earlier this year, means that he can never undertake the definitive biography, the absence of which he regretted. Nevertheless, the present strongly recommended work remains a permanent reminder of Dr. Gibbs' many contributions to scholarship in the history of science.

J. K. CRELLIN

Medical Advance, Public Health and Social Evolution, by CHARLES WILCOCKS, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1965, pp. vi, 271, illus., 21s.

'This book is not a history of Medicine; it is an attempt to relate medical progress to the intellectual climate of the various broad periods of history, and to the social changes which took place in those periods and which influenced—and were influenced by—medical progress'. This is the author's *apologia pro labor sua*. As this is the plan of this little volume many details of medical and surgical techniques which would have been appropriate for mention in a history find no place. As however the growth of ideas and the events which have impinged upon medical progress have occurred