

### *Book Reviews*

letters are introduced, commented on, and annotated by the editor. The result is an excellent picture of a part of nineteenth-century science previously unrevealed. Other one-time colonies could well emulate Dr. Moyal's original and revealing contribution to the history of science. A similar technique could also be applied to the history of medicine.

RONALD L. NUMBERS, *Prophetess of health: a study of Ellen G. White*, New York, Harper & Row, 1976, 8vo, pp. xiv, 271, illus., \$10.00.

Whereas the founder of the Mormons, of the Christian Scientists and of the Jehovah's Witnesses are relatively well known, little has been written on the originator of the other major American religious sect, the Seventh-day Adventists. The author, who is Assistant Professor of the History of Medicine in the University of Wisconsin, now presents an unbiassed account intended for the general reader, of the career of this remarkable person, Mrs. Ellen Gould White (1827–1915), as it concerns her activities as a health reformer and religious leader.

Mrs. White's religious beliefs were based on visions which she claimed were divinely inspired. Whether they were original with her has been contested, but the fact remains that her sect today has over two million believers in various parts of the world.

As a health reformer she advocated vegetarianism, hydropathy, the building of sanatoria, dress reform, sexual advice, and, like many of these multi-faceted, nineteenth-century advocates, she was involved with phrenology. The author deals with each of these themes, setting them accurately in their contemporary setting and using for his material a good deal of previously unavailable sources. He has, therefore, not only given us an excellent account of a fascinating and influential lady, but has also provided an important contribution to lesser-known aspects of the history of nineteenth-century medicine.

MARGERY G. BLACKIE, *The patient not the cure. The challenge of homoeopathy*, London, Macdonald & Jane's, 1976, 8vo, pp. [7 11.], 247, illus., £4.95.

One usually becomes suspicious when a concept or system has to be defended vociferously against majority opinion. Why, if homeopathy is so successful, do its practitioners have to extol its virtues in the form of a challenge? If it is so much more effective than allopathic medicine, why are we not all purveying it?

Dr. Blackie introduces her book with a long survey of the history of homeopathy. There is a lengthy account of Hahnemann and his early followers, but no attempt is made to understand the historical reasons for their new system. The rest of the book deals with the modern practice of homeopathy, and included are the inevitable case histories demonstrating the inadequacies of allopathic medicine.

What is really needed is an unbiased account perhaps by a medical historian who can survey the evolution of homeopathy in Britain since the late eighteenth century. Why has it survived? What has been the influence of royal patronage? What are the social, rather than the medical, aspects that have allowed it to flourish or which may stunt its growth? Is there anything in it other than great attention to the healing powers of nature and to adequate doctor/patient rapport?