

## Book Reviews

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*A Catalogue of Printed Books in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library. II—Books printed from 1641 to 1850 A—E*, London, The Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1966, pp. xi, 540, £10 10s.

The second part of the Wellcome Catalogue of Printed Books, of which this volume is the first instalment, covers a period much less fully explored by bibliographers and historians than the first volume which stopped at 1640. The limits of this new part of the Catalogue are arbitrary dates of convenience, starting before the foundation of the Royal Society and ending in the formative period of chemistry and cytology a decade before the impact of Darwin, for the Wellcome collection covers the matrix of natural science from which medicine cannot be divorced. On the other hand the authors listed in this first volume (the catalogue being alphabetically arranged by author-entry) are a fortuitous selection included because their initial falls between A and E. These include, besides authors native to the period, editions printed then of earlier and even ancient writers, providing a useful historical record of continued interest in these classic writers. The cataloguing formula is admirably concise and informative, indicating pagination, format and imprint. Naturally there are a few mistakes in such a large-scale work, but I have noticed none of importance.

A vast fund of medical and near-medical literature is here made accessible, this volume alone listing some 18,000 items, and it is particularly instructive to note the ample provision of unfamiliar German books and of continental versions of English classics, such as an Italian translation of Baillie's *Morbid Anatomy* or a Portuguese one of Currie's *Medical Reports*. There are splendid series of editions of, among others, Bartholin, Boerhaave, Robert Boyle, William Buchan, Cheselden, Culpeper, Thomas Denman, Kenelm Digby, as well as copies of such uncommon but important books as Arent Cant *Impetus primi anatomici* 1721, or William Briggs *Ophthalmographia* 1676. Several non-scientific writers appear for whom, as Dr. Poynter says in his Preface, 'explanation but no excuse might be expected', such as Bernadin de St. Pierre, 'Concordance' Cruden, George (as well as William) Cruikshank, Daniel Defoe, and John Evelyn. Dr. Poynter and his chief cataloguer Mr. H. R. Denham have been generous in recording the special points of individual books, their inscriptions, bookplates, etc.

No library is ever complete, and the publication of a catalogue brings an added benefit by drawing attention to desiderata. For instance the rich array of Sir Charles Bell's publications lacks one or two high-spots, while the varied writings of that interesting character Jean de Carro, the apostle of vaccination and promoter of Carlsbad, are very thinly represented. These lacunae may perhaps have been filled, just as Dr. Poynter points out that the fine collection of Americana in English and Spanish has been notably increased since the Catalogue was completed in 1962.

W. R. LEFANU.

*History of the Trustees of the Hunterian Collection*, by SIR VICTOR NEGUS, Edinburgh and London, E. & S. Livingstone, 1966, pp. viii, 140, plates, 30s.

When John Hunter died in 1793, his estate consisted chiefly of his unique collection

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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-