

Book Notices

FRANÇOIS DELAPORTE, *The history of yellow fever: an essay on the birth of tropical medicine*, transl. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, Mass., and London, MIT Press, 1991, pp. xvi, 181, £19.95.

The history of the American south and of the Spanish Main would have been far less painful had it not been for yellow fever, a disease whose causation and epidemiology for centuries eluded medical observers. Responsibility for the eventual discovery, in 1900, that the disease was transmitted by a mosquito has been a source of competition and conflict between Cuban and American historians. In this book, a Frenchman takes up a judicial position to sort out the truth in this primacy issue, and determines, essentially, in favour of the English, who put both the Cubans and the Americans on the right track. This is a very French book, intricately argued, constructed like a detective story and embellished by descriptive vignettes; its focus is a rather small point in the wider history of tropical medicine; but at least we may now hope that this particular primacy issue has been settled.

RICHARD OLSON, *Science deified and science defied: the historical significance of science in Western culture*, vol. 2, *From the early modern age through the early romantic era, ca. 1640 to ca. 1820*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford, University of California Press, 1990, pp. xi, 445, illus., \$45.00 (0-520-06846-7).

This is the second volume that Richard Olson has devoted to a project of very ambitious scope: nothing less than tracing “the historical significance of science in western culture”. The first volume, covering the ancient, medieval, and Renaissance periods, was published in 1982. We are told that a third will complete the work. The project takes for granted the integrity of “western civilization”, as it has traditionally been taught in American universities, and the continuity of a tradition of “science” within it.

Soranus' gynecology, transl. Owsei Temkin, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, pp. xlix, 258, £13.50 (paperback, 0-8018-4320-0).

Soranus of Ephesus, the Greek doctor who lived in the second century AD, is known to historians of medicine for his work on gynaecology and obstetrics, the only surviving complete Greek work on that topic since Hippocrates, and secondly, for being a representative of the Methodist school which differentiated itself from both the Dogmatists and the Empiricists in its attitude towards disease causation.

Johns Hopkins has re-published in a paperback edition Temkin's English translation of Soranus' *Gynecology* which first appeared in hardback in 1956. Though Temkin, in the introduction to the translation, announces that his aim is to address the non-classicist reader, this book is extremely valuable for historians of ancient medicine as it addresses some of the problems they face in finding correct translations for Greek words, especially in materia medica. A demanding reader would expect from a reissue more notes and a longer introduction. Yet the value of having a reprint in paperback is definitely great.

BOOK ALSO RECEIVED

(The inclusion of a title does not preclude the possibility of subsequent review. Items received, other than those assigned for review, are ultimately incorporated into the collection of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.)

Bibliography of the history of medicine, National Library of Medicine, no. 26, Bethesda, MD, US Department of Health and Human Services, 1991, pp. x, 384, \$22.50 (worldwide), \$18.00 (USA).

Questions d'Histoire de la Médecine, Actes du 113^e Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes, Paris, Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques, 1991, pp. 115, 110 Frs (2-7355-0224-4).

Report of proceedings of the Scottish Society of the History of Medicine, Session 1984-1985, pp. 42, Session 1985-1986, pp. 44.