

### Book Reviews

of recent Ministers of Health, 'Hospitals are for people'. We seldom get any glimpse of what the hospitals were really doing and what the condition of the wards in which the patients were nursed was like. When under the Local Government Act of 1929 the Metropolitan Asylums Board handed over its functions to the newly constituted London County Council, what was then the condition of the hospitals that the new authority took over? Did they require a great deal of improvement, or did they deteriorate? There is much that we should like to know on which Dr. Ayers is silent. Recollections of those who knew these hospitals soon after the take-over are possibly not entirely reliable but in their minds there remains an uncomplimentary picture which bears no comparison with the condition of the voluntary hospitals of that period.

This massive account of the work of the Metropolitan Asylums Board is most thorough and will be of great interest to those who wish to follow the growth of the administrative machinery of the greater London Council.

R. M. S. MCCONAGHEY

*The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, ed. and trans. by A. RUPERT HALL and MARIE BOAS HALL, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1965-(in progress), vols. IV-VI (£4.75 per volume), vols. VII-VIII (£9.50 per volume), 1967-71.

The first three volumes of this invaluable source-book for the history of science and medicine in the seventeenth century have already been reviewed at some length in these pages (1968, 12, 208-9), where attention was drawn to the medical importance of many of the letters. Volumes IV-VI show a marked increase of interest in biological matters, especially comparative anatomy and physiology. The controversy which arose from the earliest attempts at human blood transfusion in 1667 is well documented here in correspondence between Jean Denis of Paris and Oldenburg, who upheld English claims to priority. In this set of volumes is also to be found the remarkable correspondence with Marcello Malpighi, for whom the Royal Society was an inspiration and support during difficult years at home when he was pursuing his researches into embryology. The controversy over the physiology of reproduction between Timothy Clarke and Regnier de Graaf may also be followed here and we can see why the originality of de Graaf's work was challenged. In subsequent volumes the researches into natural history begun by Ray and Willughby and continued by the young Martin Lister provide material for a number of letters, supplemented by discussion of the work of Jan Swammerdam and Thomas Bartholin. The French physician Moyse Charas discussed his special preparation of theriac and alludes to the disputes between the physicians and apothecaries of London. But many others, too numerous to mention, also appear here. Robert Boyle naturally figures prominently in all the volumes, but we find also Sir Thomas Browne and his son Edward, Highmore, Glauber, John Graunt, Van Helmont, Richard Lower, Christopher Merret, Pecquet, Walter Needham, Petty, Steno and Sylvius (de le Boë)

The high editorial standards established in the earlier volumes are scrupulously maintained, and there is little doubt that when this edition of Oldenburg's correspondence is completed it will be taken as a model for all future work of a similar nature.

F. N. L. POYNTER