

## Book Reviews

FREDERICK BURKHARDT and SYDNEY SMITH (editors), *The correspondence of Charles Darwin. Volume 1 1821–1836*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, 8vo, pp. xxxix, 702, illus., £30.00.

“What changes I have had”, wrote the twenty-two year old Darwin, “hunting Foxes in Shropshire, now Lamas in S America”. Changes there were. While Cambridge friends rusticated in their vicarages (sons of the gentry staffed the church and professions), Darwin—blank cheque in hand—bubbled at the prospect of entomologizing in tropical countries “red-hot with Spiders”. His sisters feared the experience would finish him for the parsonage. More than anything, the first volume of *Correspondence* illustrates this cossetting world of wealthy Whiggism: an indulgent world in which “the Dr.’s” draft covered everything. (“I shall . . . be giving ye Dr. a practical proof shortly that I am alive by sending for some money”, announced elder brother Erasmus from Cambridge.) Charles found diversion from the social whirl of the Shrewsbury manors—the hunt balls, concerts, shoots, and gaiety and dissipation—only in “the Science”, beetle-hunting.

For medical historians, there are vignettes of student life in Edinburgh, Cambridge, and the Great Windmill Street school (attended by Erasmus in 1826–7). Edinburgh and a medical career had been chosen for Darwin by his sixteenth birthday, although Erasmus (case-hardened in Cambridge) prophetically wondered whether Charles would ever stomach dissection. Charles entered Edinburgh in October 1825, indignant that “the Dr.” (there was a certain formality towards father) still regarded him as a “boy”. While his sisters plied him with Shropshire gossip, their flirtations and favourite “*Shootables*”, Charles responded with cameos of his medical teachers—Duncan (“so very learned that his wisdom has left no room for his sense”), and Monro *tertius* (“I dislike him & his Lectures so much that I cannot speak with decency about them”). Erasmus’s observations are equally revealing: his horror at Glasgow students playing football in college, and the contrasting decorum in Great Windmill Street (no scrapes, no applause, and no impatience when Mayo “got animated about some old bones & kept on for an hour & a half”).

The letters testify to Darwin’s wealthy Whig entrée into polite society: at Edinburgh (where he partied with professors) and at Cambridge. (Sedgwick turned up so often at the Mount that it was thought Susan Darwin was sweet on him.) And, of course, it led to his place as self-financed gentleman-companion to FitzRoy on the *Beagle*. Ultimately, it is the light these letters shed on the social mores of the minor Whig gentry, their attitude to reform, to the Church, and to the exploitation of nature, that must play a key role in future reassessments of the social origins of Darwinism. This first indispensable volume, edited with precision and incisively annotated, provides a secure basis for the social retooling of the Darwin Industry.

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JUANITA G.L. BURNBY, *A study of the English apothecary from 1660 to 1760*, London, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, *Medical History* Supplement number 3, 1983, 8vo, pp. [vi], 128, £9.00.

An agreeably produced book at a moderate price that is also innovatory and interesting can be greeted only rarely in any field, but Dr Burnby’s survey is just that. The emergence of the apothecary as a medical practitioner rather than as a provider of medicines is of considerable importance in the early modern period, as his range of drugs expanded along with the numbers of his clients, their prosperity and their expectations of medical attention. The apothecary’s status in society, and above all the contemporary view of his place in the medical pecking order, varied considerably. The apothecary could be only a small retailer, with an artisan clientèle, indistinguishable from his fellow minor tradesmen in a community. On the other hand, however, he might be a wholesale distributor of drugs, with a regional network of customers, or have eminent upper-class patients. Such men married well, lived in large town

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houses and were leaders in their community, often masters of several prosperous apprentices with whom they took substantial premiums. Dr Burnby traces the apothecary's rise and clarifies his place in the confused state of medical practice in the early modern period. She describes too the other scientific preoccupations that we might expect apothecaries to have, including chemistry and botany, and also their wide-ranging cultural interests, buying books and visiting antiquities.

Dr Burnby's survey displays an excellent range of sources, skilfully exploited and often newly used for the purpose of revealing apothecaries, not merely as names and dates but as men in their contemporary setting. Her literary approach fortunately avoids over-reliance on statistical techniques and her grasp of family networks should remind us that acquaintanceship oiled the wheels of early modern England.

Perhaps the great unresolved puzzle to emerge from Dr Burnby's book is why apothecaries were generally held in low esteem by their contemporaries, "the veriest knaves in England" practising a "contemptible" trade. It is easy to see why the surgeon and especially the physician feared the apothecary as a rival, prepared to give professional advice free and make his profits from dispensing drugs. That many apothecaries did so well financially presumably aroused jealousy and envy among their competitors, who took refuge in the peculiarly English response of despising a man for making money unless he had risen from very humble origins. Many of the apothecaries whose careers are described by Dr Burnby were provincial men and it is gratifying to see them studied in detail, since they undoubtedly treated far more of the population than the London practitioners who have hitherto chiefly preoccupied medical historians. The rise of the pharmaceutical chemist is also considered, and Dr Burnby places his emergence earlier in the eighteenth century than has formerly been proved, as well as suggesting that the apothecaries' role in the patent medicine industry has been largely ignored. Dr Burnby's survey of a profession whose origins she knows so well, with many fascinating insights and trenchant comments, will be a most welcome addition to the medical history specialist and the reader interested in the making of early modern England.

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MARIE BOAS HALL, *All scientists now*, Cambridge University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. xii, 261, illus., £25.00.

Much has been written about the origins and early years of the Royal Society, but this is the first comprehensive account of the nineteenth-century development—a key period in which a club for wealthy amateur scientists, antiquarians, and patrons of science and learning was transformed into the premier scientific society of this country. The book naturally falls into two parts: the first half deals essentially with the administrative changes and controversies within the Society which reflect the shifts in attitude towards scientific research in Britain during this period: the second part is outward-looking and examines the impact made by the Society on science. There is a certain amount of repetition between the two halves of the book, but that is impossible to avoid with this kind of structure. Its strength is that the Royal Society is squarely put into the nineteenth-century context of private and increasingly government-sponsored science.

The way the Society evolved by degrees from dilettantism to scientific professionalism is chronicled through the succession of Presidents, starting with the autocratic Sir Joseph Banks, who reigned as a benign despot for forty-one years, from 1778 to 1820. Younger Fellows began to react more and more against a Society which they felt to be too entrenched in the antiquated world of the eighteenth century, and the first hints of reform came with Banks's death. The Presidency of Sir Humphry Davy in the 1820s heralded the Society's increasingly scientific orientation, but the dilettante aristocratic element remained strongly represented, as signified by the election to the Presidency of HRH the Duke of Sussex in 1830. He, too, instigated reform, and during his term of office, presidential authority was weakened and that