

### Book Reviews

*A Biographical Dictionary of Scientists*, ed. by TREVOR I. WILLIAMS, London, A. & C. Black, 1969, pp. xi, 592, £5.

*World Who's Who in Science . . . from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. by ALLEN G. DEBUS, Chicago, Ill., Marquis—Who's Who Incorporated, 1968, pp. xvi, 1855, \$51.

The publication of these two important reference works within only a few months of each other is indicative of the present demand for easily-accessible information about the lives and work of the leading contributors to science. Although they seem to present the potential purchaser with a problem of choice, the purpose and character of each is different. The British work is 'designed for the general reader as well as the serious student' and offers 'over 1,000 biographies of eminent scientists and technologists' in large clear type set in double columns. Written in a discursive form, avoiding technical language as much as possible, each entry has a list of authoritative references for further reading. In short, it is the kind of book—like the *Dictionary of National Biography*—which one can pick up and read at random to satisfy one's interest.

The American volume, on the other hand, contains over 30,000 entries set in small type in three columns on a large page, on the same pattern as the publisher's other 'Who's Who' volumes. This is a marvel of compression and will probably not call for any critical comment from those concerned only with modern figures, but the historian may find this treatment a little bizarre.

It has been calculated that the vast majority of all scientists who have ever existed are still living. More than a half of the entries in the present volume refer to living scientists and have been checked for accuracy by the biographee. To force the historical entries into the same kind of rigid pattern must have faced the editor with many challenges to his historical sensitivity, for Professor Debus is himself a historian of science. However, both he and his publishers are to be congratulated on bringing this tremendous undertaking to a successful conclusion. It is of course an indispensable first-line reference work which one will expect to find in any library.

F. N. L. POYNTER

*The Diary of Richard Kay (1716–51), a Lancashire Doctor*, ed. by W. BROCKBANK and F. KENWORTHY, Manchester, University of Manchester Press for the Chetham Society, 1968, pp. vii, 179, illus., 50s.

Ten years ago *Medical History* published extracts from the diary of Richard Kay, an eighteenth-century general practitioner in Bury, Lancs. These gave a tantalising glimpse into provincial medical practice as well as a view of education at Guy's Hospital. Dr. Brockbank and the Rev. F. Kenworthy have now edited a more substantial version of this diary, from a typed manuscript in Manchester Reference Library.

Its appearance is most welcome. Far too few primary sources exist for the history of eighteenth-century general practice. This one shows us a provincial doctor coping with a busy practice and a troublesome conscience. In both respects Kay was probably fairly typical of a large number of provincial doctors in the mid-eighteenth century. Certainly there can be nothing unusual about his intense religious feelings or his