

Book Notices

Communications of the Museum Boerhaave, Leiden (all illus., paperback; ISBN prefix 90-6292): PETER de CLERQ, *The Leiden Cabinet of Physics*, No. 233, 1989, pp. 56, (082-9); E. DEKKER, *The Leiden Sphere: an exceptional seventeenth-century planetarium*, No. 222, 1986, pp. 40, (071-3); MARIAN FOURNIER, *The medico-mechanical equipment of Doctor Zander*, No. 229, 1989, pp. 32, (078-0); K. S. GROOSS, *Cornelis Solingen: a seventeenth-century surgeon and his instruments*, No. 238, 1990, pp. 32, (087-X); ANNE C. van HELDEN, *The coldest spot on earth: Kamerlingh Onnes and low temperature research, 1882–1923*, No. 235, 1989, pp. 32, (084-5).

The Museum Boerhaave re-opens to the public this year on the premises of the famous Caecilia Hospital. Enthusiasts have long admired the rich treasures of this museum and these excellent catalogues will now make some of its resources known more widely. All the catalogues are, presumably, aimed at a general audience. They are full of illustrations of objects, contemporary pictures and diagrams. The texts are helpful but not extensive or over-technical. None the less, scholarly standards are adhered to. For instance, the catalogue of Solingen's surgical instruments addresses the important question of what artifacts can be definitely identified as Solingen's. It then incorporates descriptions and illustrations of all twenty-three items so identified. Similarly, the equipment of Jonas Zander is fully listed and described at the end of a most helpful guide to the little known, yet clearly historically significant, subject of medical gymnastics. The uniformity of style and design (a curious but not unpleasant throwback to the 1950s) of these catalogues could be a lesson from which other museums might learn.

PAOLO FRASCANI (ed.), *Sanità e società*, vol. 5, *Abruzzi, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, secoli XVII-XX*, Udine, Casamassima for the Fidia Research Foundation, Washington, 1990, pp. 352, illus.

This is the fifth and probably last volume of a series of tomes on "health and society" in Italy that the Fidia Research Foundation has been publishing since 1986. The book should provide a picture of the evolution of medicine in Southern Italy from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. In reality, only the case of Naples is thoroughly examined. Five of the nine essays focus on this city, investigating the interplay between medical institutions, medical resources and ideas, over three centuries. The other regions that the volume is supposed to cover are, by contrast, widely under-researched. The studies devoted to Irpinia, and portions of Puglia and Calabria, also adopt a much narrower focus, confining their interest to patterns of morbidity and occupational diseases in the nineteenth century—themes to which Italian historians have already paid great attention. This disproportion is partly the result of the odd geographical structure given to the series, which sets these volumes the impossible task of grouping together regions with very little in common, in terms both of history and political structure and of ecological, social and economic conditions.

JACQUES GESSER with STANLEY B. BURNS, *Photographie et médecine 1840–1880*, Lausanne, Institut universitaire d'Histoire de la Médecine et de la Santé Publique, 1991, pp. 47, illus., (2-9700002-0-2).

If the bibliophile's catalogue of rare books has a photographic equivalent, this is it. The work is an exhibition catalogue of sixty-seven "photographs" (tintypes, ambrotypes etc.) relating to medicine, and made before 1880. Glossy and well produced, it is unfortunate that the catalogue includes only twenty small reproductions and fifteen large ones. The reader is thus left to imagine what, for example, a photograph of "Saignée par un médecin des frontières" in America in 1860

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might look like. The pictures reproduced here are rare and extraordinary. There is very little to compare them with and, so ill-equipped are historians with decoding skills for photographs, the sense of their extraordinariness is unlikely to be diffused by the commentary in this catalogue. The collection, overwhelmingly, comprises clinical photographs with a few, very few, pictures of surgery or physicians seemingly at work. But whether "Le Dr Letterman examinant un patient" of 1849 is a contemporary title or whether the compilers are guessing and this is actually Dr Letterman musing on death or doing a conjuring trick we are not told. In spite of the introductory assertion that "Comme une fenêtre magique, la photographie nous permet de jeter un coup d'oeil dans le passé de la médecine et de suivre ses triomphes" (p. 11), the reader may feel these pictures are well worth seeing but deeply puzzling.

JENNIFER MEGLAUGHLIN (comp.), *British nursing badges: an illustrated handbook*, vol. 1, *Nursing organizations past and present, nursing services of the Armed Forces, midwifery, and the specializations of cardio-thoracic, dental, CNT, ophthalmic and orthopaedic nursing*, London, Vade-Mecum, 1990, pp. 182, illus., £29.50 (0-946836-35-3), £14.50 (paperback, 0-946836-40-X).

A useful review of badges (with some medals) that includes historical notes on the organizations and hospitals that have sponsored them—many during the 1970s. This first volume covers general nursing institutes and associations plus seven specialist areas. A further volume is promised to include paediatric and mental nursing, and the general hospital and nurse training school badges of the U.K. Black and white illustrations (212) are given of badges at about actual size, together with text details of their colouring, symbolism and design genesis. A selection of colour photographs is also provided, although rather inconsequentially located in the book and with no cross referencing to text pages or equivalent monochrome figure numbers. The subject has proved a fertile one for would-be designers—with attributions ranging from Queen Alexandra to a variety of consultants, tutors, student and staff nurses, or members of an association (such as that for plastic surgery nurses with their silhouette design of Queen Nefertiti's head). The more professional designers are represented by commissions to staff and students of art schools; that to the sculptor Miss C. Lanchester for St Peter's Chertsey produced a 1973 bronze badge clearly in the mainstream of modern medallic design. An unattributed, undated (early twentieth-century?) badge for the British Lying-In Hospital—with a lion crushing the writhing serpent of puerperal sepsis—indicates what could be achieved in detailed silverwork design.

PIETRO CORSI (ed.), *The enchanted loom: chapters in the history of neuroscience*, History of Neuroscience 4, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 383, illus., \$60.00, £50.00 (0-19-506646-4).

This is a curious though attractive volume. Its origins lie in an exhibition held in Florence in 1989 titled *La fabbrica del pensiero: Dall'arte della memoria alle neuroscienze*. The first part on medieval mnemonic devices seems oddly out of place. It is followed by three chapters written by historians that provide conventional accounts of the principal episodes and topics in the history of the neurosciences from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. While there is little that is new in this section, it does provide a competent and convenient introduction to the main outlines of the field.

The concluding chapters of the book are the work of scientists engaged in contemporary neuroscientific research. The gap between the style and preoccupations of historians and practitioners is striking although perhaps predictable. As significant, however, is the apparently random nature of the topics in twentieth-century neuroscience chosen for treatment: there is no sense of the overall shape and direction of the field, an indication that its true history is yet to be written.

The chief recommendation of this book is, however, its lavish illustrations. They are educative as well as attractive—a delight to eye and brain alike.