

Book Reviews

here about scientific ideas or discoveries). Instead he tackles head-on in successive chapters the historiographical problems posed by Restoration science. What was its relationship to the natural philosophy of the Interregnum? What were the origins of the Royal Society? What was the importance of the Society during its first fifty years? How plausible is the Marxist-cum-Mertonian case that the development of capitalism and the accompanying needs of technology boosted interest in science and scientific advance? In its turn did science legitimize capitalism and an “opportunity society”? Did Puritanism, or Anglicanism, contribute to involvement in science? In its turn, how far was Restoration science used to buttress religion? Or was science a threat to faith (as also to humane letters and scholarly traditions of learning in the universities)?

These and other questions are discussed by Dr. Hunter with scrupulously accurate attention to arguments on all sides of the scholarly divide (no straw men – or women – here), and with a wealth of illustrative material of his own, much culled from unpublished archives – the testament to voracious reading and focused attention. If a middle course is steered on many of these issues, it is no wet compromise, but because the judicious Hunter (like the judicious Hooker) finds wisdom in many places, and constructs a golden mean of interpretation which surely does justice to the complexity of the age (the excellent critical bibliography raps some of the more one-sided versions of Restoration science over the knuckles). On issue after issue, Dr. Hunter is generous but balanced, praising, for example, the great merits of Charles Webster’s account of Interregnum science while properly alerting the reader to his partisan reading of the “betrayal” after 1660.

The medical historian might find here less of direct relevance to him than he expects. For Dr. Hunter has what seems a curious paradox to offer: that, though it was to a large degree in the bio-medical sciences that English science bloomed in mid-century, though the early members of the Royal Society included eminent biomedical men such as Thomas Willis, and though plenty of medical papers were printed in the *Philosophical Transactions*, in fact the London medical community related only rather fitfully to the Royal Society (Sydenham, for instance, did not join), and the Society did not contribute much to developments in medical science. Divided loyalties with the College of Physicians, and problems with professional identity may, suggests Dr. Hunter, have played their part in this.

Dr. Hunter has written a well-researched, closely argued, economical and lively book, essential reading for scholars and students alike. It is a pity that this well-produced volume (there are few misprints, except the now almost obligatory rendering of Charles Gillispie as Gillespie) of 230 pages should retail at the monstrous hardback price of £18.50.

Roy Porter
Wellcome Institute

NORMAN DAIN, *Clifford W. Beers: advocate for the insane*, Pittsburg, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980, pp. xxix, 392, illus., \$19.95.

Clifford Beers (1876–1943) is remembered primarily as the author of an autobiographical study describing his own mental breakdown. Beers decided to write the book, entitled *The mind that found itself*, while in the manic phase of a manic-

Book Reviews

depressive episode. He also then determined to do what he could to prevent others from receiving the same insensitive and at times callous treatment which had been his lot in various mental hospitals. Beers's book, and his own charismatic personality, became showpieces in the mental hygiene movement. He became secretary of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, a voluntary agency for which Beers raised millions of dollars for its work in public education, its surveys on the incidence and causation of mental disorder, and its attempt to raise the standard of institutional care for the insane. By the 1930s the movement had become international, the First International Congress (1930) attracting more than 3,000 delegates from forty-one countries.

Through his more than a quarter-century association with the National Committee, Beers was in a rather anomalous position. Forced to work closely with establishment psychiatrists, he sometimes differed from them on fundamental matters of policy. As a former mental patient, he might have been expected to welcome other fellow sufferers into the inner élite of the movement, but caution and his own egocentric personality dictated otherwise. He dedicated his life to preaching the preventability of mental disorders, yet he came from a family which was riddled with mental instability, and he and all but one of his brothers decided not to have children for fear that the family curse would be perpetuated.

Norman Dain's massive biography reconstructs a full account of Beer's life and achievements. It is based on an exhaustive examination of relevant archives of Beers and his associates and supporters, including Adolf Meyer, William H. Welch, Julia Lathrop, William A. White and William James. Dain largely lets the documents speak for themselves. The result is an extraordinarily well-researched biography. But Dain remains so close to his material that the volume lacks two desiderata. First, Beers never really comes alive. He remains a rather complicated mouthpiece, full of contradictions but never, in this narrative, given the colour which he must have had. Dain need not have resorted to psychohistory to enliven his occasional psychological comments on Beers's fascinating personality.

Second, Dain never really attempts systematically to assess the achievements and failures of the National Committee. In his perceptive introduction, he raises a number of issues about the relevance of that Committee in the wake of the 1960s Community Mental Health Movement and the psychiatric critiques of writers like David Laing and Thomas Szasz. These more general matters would have been put into sharper historical focus had Dain looked more comprehensively at the work of the Committee, even if it had meant sacrificing some of the detailed concern with minute financial crises and personal tensions which plagued the Committee and its members.

Despite these limitations, Dain's monograph is an important contribution to twentieth-century psychiatric history. Beers's life and his book still hold their relevance and their interest, not least because the mind that found itself finally failed and Beers spent his final years in a psychiatric hospital, increasingly unresponsive to the outside world.

W. F. Bynum
Wellcome Institute