

Book Reviews

GARLAND E. ALLEN, *Life science in the twentieth century*, New York and London, John Wiley, 1975, 8vo, pp. xxv, 258, illus., £6.30 (£3.55 paperback).

The author's aim is to present a general history of biological ideas as they came out of the nineteenth century to create the experimental, analytically rigorous and interpretative life science as we know it today. He recognizes the need to deal with both the internal, or scientific, content of this process, and with the external, or "social", factors, but prefers to consider only the former. Areas examined are those that have proved to be so influential, such as genetics, embryology, evolutionary theory, general physiology, molecular biology and biochemistry, during the selected period of 1890 through 1965. It seems to have been the influence of the physical sciences at the end of the nineteenth century that promoted their rapid growth. The younger workers were then moving away from the descriptive and speculative approach of their teachers and the weighty influence of Darwinian theory, and were seeking for more scientific precision. To facilitate his handling of this complex subject, Professor Allen uses the interaction of mechanical with dialectical materialism as a guide, and he shows how the former has served biology in its earlier steps towards an essential experimental methodology, although the latter also has a role.

He is least effective when discussing molecular biology and biochemistry, and in the latter there are several significant errors and omissions. However, this is a thoughtful book written in a lively style, although without notes; the critical bibliography to some extent makes up for this omission. There are numerous typographical errors, no legends to the illustrations and the index is meagre.

R. R. BOLGAR (editor), *Classical influences on European culture A.D. 1500–1700*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. xviii, 383, illus., £12.50.

These twenty-seven scholarly essays were presented at a King's College, Cambridge, conference, without formal discussions. In 1971 a similar conference led to a well-received book, *Classical influences on European culture A.D. 500–1500*. The question, "What needs to be done?" added to the title of the meeting, but not to that of the book, indicates the intentions of the organizers: "to call attention to the gaps in our knowledge about the influence of classical learning". An item in the excellent index will lead the reader to "Research opportunities".

The papers are grouped into 'Catalogues and editions of humanist works' and 'The humanists in the Renaissance'. In the latter there are articles on 'The humanist contribution to the arts of discourse', 'Humanism and religion', 'Humanism and political thought' and 'The contribution of the humanists to the useful and the fine arts'. Although science and medicine have been purposely excluded, there is a great deal here for students of renaissance and seventeenth-century medicine. The essays are by renowned experts, written with authority and impeccable scholarship. Their book can be strongly recommended.

T. E. ALLIBONE, *The Royal Society and its dining clubs*, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. xv, 457, illus., £16.50.

It seems likely that six or more dining clubs have been associated with the Royal