

Book Reviews

The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations, by WALTER ADDISON JAYNE, New York, University Books, 1962, pp. XXI, 569, \$62.

It is an interesting reflection of the movement of current thought that the present time is chosen to reprint Walter Addison Jayne's encyclopaedic work published in 1925 on the healing gods. The reason for this action clearly lies in the feeling that we need these gods. This book is a printed protest against the materialism of modern medicine; an attempt (as it was in 1925) to lay out the facts of healing as expressed by those spiritual powers used by the ancients. These have gone into disuse today as a result of scientific scepticism. 'The gods spelled out the setting in which people who were sick could become well,' writes Thomas E. Gaddis in the foreword. More than that they were the instruments of physical and mental effects of healing which have only partially been replaced by the syringe and the pill.

The book is laid out as a survey of the Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, Iranian, Greek, Roman, and Celtic gods. In each part a first section describes the background of the regional pantheon; this is followed by more detailed consideration of the part played by the individual healing gods.

Even knowledge of the gods has moved in the past thirty-seven years; for example, fresh translations of papyri have been made and further sources of information on Asklepios have come to light. Good as these studies of the gods are, one cannot help being aware of their truncation at 1925. This date is again brought into one's mind by the seven rather poor illustrations. These are much too meagre to bring as vivid a picture of the pantheon of healers before the reader as they should do.

But these are small criticisms in the face of the big fact that the original edition of Jayne's valuable work, which had become quite unobtainable, is now again generally available. It will be widely welcomed.

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A Short History of Medicine, by CHARLES SINGER and E. ASHWORTH UNDERWOOD, 2nd ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962, pp. XVI+854, 21 pl., 147 fig., 63s.

The *Short History of Medicine* of Charles Singer, which since 1928 had given to so many a charming and fascinating first glimpse of medical history, reappears revised and extended with much learning and industry by Dr. E. Ashworth Underwood. While Dr. Underwood has been so wise as to change but little in the original treatise, he has added a second part, more voluminous than the original book and dealing with the progress of scientific medicine during the last hundred years. He has emphasized especially physiology, bacteriology and the history of infectious diseases, preventive medicine and the history of some specialities.

The title 'Short history' has thus become somewhat of an understatement; the organization of the book, never its strength, could not be called more transparent; and the appropriateness of its proportions, which leaves but one-fourth to all that came before 1800 might be a matter of discussion. But though changed in character, in its new form the book will still be most desirable and very useful for the medical student, teacher and practitioner. In no other existing history of medicine can more detailed information on the above-mentioned items be found. The book thus fills a definite need and does it well. Excellent indices, bibliographies, and a list of Nobel Prize winners add to the usefulness of the book. It is richly and excellently illustrated.

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