

Book Reviews

The reasons are clear enough. Industrial centres were not, in reality, wastelands of *anomie* and alienation, but thriving communities in which close living, plentiful work, and high wages gave the new proletariat reasons for living, not dying. Increasingly, the most dramatically suicide-prone in Victorian England were old men — and male figures were notably higher than female — superannuated, and often ill, who could not face the prospect of the workhouse.

Yet overall, Professor Anderson advises caution. There was no single suicide profile. In Southwark, the suicide was likely to be a heavy-drinking artisan falling on bad times; in Westminster, a guardsman from Chelsea barracks; in Marylebone, a prostitute robbed by a client. In 1850, destitution proper played a large part. By 1900, “psychological” factors were perhaps becoming more important — feelings of relative failure in the work and emotional market-places. Self-destructiveness and public attitude towards suicide mutated in a complex symbiosis.

A brief review cannot even list the riches of this alert and expert analysis — there is, for example, a good discussion of prevention agencies such as the Salvation Army, and an admirable account of how shifts in domestic technology, from disinfectants to gas ovens, transformed the instruments of quietus. But brief mention must be made of Professor Anderson’s subtle grasp of the divided medical reaction to suicide. A small cadre of psychologists, especially towards the close of the century, identified suicide as a symptom of degeneration and regarded it with a certain fatalism. A larger corps of “sanitarians” believed that suicide was an environmental disease for which environmental remedies should be possible (including caging in the Monument). But most general practitioners, wedded neither to psychological medicine nor to old religious explanations, were inclined to treat the suicide and the attempted suicide with the same baffled awe as the public at large. It was all sad stuff, as this pioneering, absorbing, and learned volume so expertly shows.

Roy Porter
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STANTON J. LINDEN, *William Cooper’s ‘A catalogue of chymicall books 1673–88’. A verified edition*, New York and London, Garland Publishing, 1987, 8vo, pp. liv, 159, \$37.00.

In presenting the reader with a “verified edition” of William Cooper’s *Catalogue of chymicall books* (1673–88), the author has two main objectives in mind. First and foremost, in producing a “modern, authoritative edition of an extensive list of scientific, medical and occult books”, Dr Linden hopes to provide fresh insights into the state of vernacular literature in these subjects in late-seventeenth-century England. And second (and one suspects of secondary importance), the author seeks to add to our understanding of science and medicine during this period via a brief biography of the publisher, William Cooper. Cooper, we are informed in the preface, exemplifies the scientific mood of his age. Not only does he uphold the scientific experimentalism of Boyle and the Royal Society whose published works he publicizes in the *Catalogue*, but of equal importance for Linden is the fact that Cooper is now best remembered as the publisher of hermetic mysteries including those of the anonymous adept, Eirenaeus Philalethes. Consequently, Cooper’s publishing and related activities are seen to reflect the diversity of contemporary interest in science and medicine, particularly amongst those members of the general public whose only access to such fields of knowledge was through vernacular texts and translations.

On the whole, the first objective is met by an efficient, concise, and easy-to-use alphabetical listing of medical, scientific, and related books, 428 in total, all of which are to be found in one of the three editions of Cooper’s *Catalogue*. Errors and omissions are thankfully few (though note that item 234 is commonly ascribed to I.W., S.T.C.: 24906, and items 55, 82, 95, and 212 should carry asterisks to indicate inclusion in the 1688 edition of the *Catalogue*), and the well-researched verification of editions is particularly illuminating with regard to previously unknown editions. Less impressive is the author’s introduction, which has little new to add to our knowledge of Cooper and which offers only a cursory analysis of the entries themselves.

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Clearly, the uses and application of such a work are limited. One is tempted, therefore, to conclude that the author may have been better advised to have utilized Cooper's *Catalogue* as the basis for a much enlarged and comprehensive bibliography of medical and scientific literature in English published before 1700, rather than settling for the more limited, but nonetheless worthy, project of a "verified edition" of a single work.

Peter Elmer
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LEONARD WEISTROP, *The life and letters of Dr Henry Vining Ogden 1857–1931*. Milwaukee Academy of Medicine Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. 339, [no price stated].

This admirable book features a charming, talented, self-effacing physician and throws new light on William Osler and Harvey Cushing. By determined detective work, Dr Weistrop eventually tracked down 334 letters involving Ogden, William Osler, and Harvey Cushing. They were from the Ogden family, the Milwaukee Academy of Medicine, the Osler Library at McGill, and the Fulton Library at Yale. The Milwaukee Academy wisely authorized this book for its centennial celebration.

Ogden studied medicine under Osler at McGill and boarded in the same house for over two years. These affable, keen, accomplished men became lifelong friends. Cushing found later that Ogden could provide more about Osler's days in Montreal than anyone else. In Milwaukee, Ogden's exceptional clinical ability and kindly interest in patients made him the community's outstanding physician. No other local doctor had such access to the consultant services of William Osler and Harvey Cushing!

Henry Ogden rode hobbies hard. For years, he hiked the prairies and canoed the lakes of Wisconsin and nearby states, expertly collecting and describing specimens of birds, flowers, and animals. His garden contained carefully labelled wild flowers. Ogden's collections in natural history were donated to the Milwaukee Public Museum and the University of Wisconsin.

Both Osler and Cushing admired Ogden's versatility, erudition, and expertise in subjects as varied as natural history, baseball, and English literature. Ogden, who lacked their single-minded devotion to medicine, led a more balanced life. Unlike Ogden, who retired in poverty, the ambitious Osler occasionally charged very large fees. Happily, friends supported Ogden comfortably throughout retirement and a lengthy illness, asserting that he had been undercharging his patients. Dr Weistrop found that Cushing in his image-polishing biography of Osler, when quoting a letter from Osler to Ogden, had deleted a racist statement.

The author has rescued from oblivion the inspirational life of a most engaging medical personality. Furthermore, his excellent book is required reading for any bold spirit about to write another life of Osler.

William B. Spaulding
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JOHN M. RIDDLE, *Dioscorides on pharmacy and medicine*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1985, 8vo, pp. xxvii, 298, illus., \$35.00.

Dioscorides on pharmacy and medicine comprises five chapters: Dioscorides' life and the state of the medical art in the first century AD (ch. 1); the method Dioscorides chose to relate his pharmacological information about individual drugs (ch. 2); the organization of his chapters on plants (ch. 3), animal and mineral drugs (ch. 4); the fortune of the *de materia medica* at the hands of Galen and the copyists (ch. 5).

By innovative use of modern pharmacognosy and ethnobotany, Riddle's evaluation of the effectiveness of Dioscorides' pharmacy, as well as his determination of the basis of the underlying organization of the *de materia medica*, is a significant and permanent contribution. He demonstrates cogently what was and has not been hitherto appreciated by practitioner,