

Book Reviews

Medals relating to Medicine and Allied Sciences in the Numismatic Collection of The Johns Hopkins University. A Catalogue, by SARAH ELIZABETH FREEMAN, Baltimore,

Maryland, The Evergreen House Foundation, 1964, pp.xx, 430, 32 plates, \$20.00. One of the most pleasing types of record which the historian has at his disposal are the medals which have been struck to commemorate either the achievements of an individual or group, or some important event in the history of a nation, an institution, or a profession. They are more lasting than many other records, not being subject to the same hazards as threaten the survival of documents or books, and they are more portable than the massive statues with which some communities, especially in the Latin countries, like to preserve the memory of their national or intellectual leaders. Some are artistic masterpieces and many contain precise information not to be found elsewhere, so that any catalogue which classifies and describes them in an orderly and intelligent manner will inevitably become a standard reference.

A number of medical institutions—museums, medical schools and societies—are fortunate enough to possess collections of medals relating to medicine and science which have been donated or bequeathed to them by eager private collectors. Johns Hopkins University has a fine numismatic collection which includes several special collections of this kind, the most important being that given by Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs in 1932, to which substantial additions have been made since. It is appropriate too that the collections of William Henry Welch and Howard Atwood Kelly have found a permanent home in the university for which they did so much.

The production of a catalogue of all these medals was initiated by the late Henry Sigerist twenty years ago and the task was entrusted to Miss Sarah Freeman, the Curator of the Numismatic Collections and a professional numismatist. The resulting catalogue is impressive, easy to consult and beautifully produced. It is certainly an important addition to the few reference works in this field published since the appearance of Dr. H. R. Storer's well-known work, *Medicina in Nummis*, in 1931. Storer's book (approx. 8,000 items) is, of course, much more comprehensive, for it attempts to describe all the medals of medical or scientific interest that he could find recorded in many years of searching, whereas Miss Freeman's Catalogue (922 items) describes only those in a single collection. It may be doubted whether it is ever possible to achieve the same consistently high level of accuracy in the one as in the other, for it is often necessary to work from photographs or from descriptions supplied by others. Bibliographers often meet this problem and solve it by distinguishing clearly between items personally examined and those which are not. It is only relevant to raise this point because of the remarks made by Miss Freeman about Storer's work in the introduction to her own Catalogue. Miss Freeman obviously takes a proper pride in her own professional skills as a numismatist and those who are not professionals must assume that her numismatic descriptions have been made with meticulous care. Whether she is altogether justified in her strictures on the amateur work of Storer may be a matter of opinion. Many who have used Storer's book extensively and are only too well aware that to err is human will nevertheless feel that our debt of gratitude for Storer's labours is so great that their minor defects need not be emphasized as they are in the Introduction to this Catalogue. Those who are likely to read it are those who know already and might well think that a more discreet and gentle *caveat*

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would have served as well. I think this is worth saying, even in a short review, because of an apparently growing tendency to denigrate valuable work because of minor flaws in its substance. If I proceed to mention a few minor flaws in Miss Freeman's Catalogue it is to demonstrate—as she herself quotes—that 'nothing is more provocative of criticism than criticism'. The celebrated author of *The Origin of Species*, for example, appears with the unfamiliar heading (in capitals) as 'Robert Charles Darwin', despite the fact that the medallic inscription is correctly copied as 'Charles Robert Darwin'. William Harvey died at Roehampton, Surrey, and not at 'Hampstead' which is an inner suburb to the north west of London. The parish church of Hempstead in Essex, has the family vault where his body was laid to rest. The name of the town where he was born is spelt 'Folkestone'. The accents in foreign languages are not optional and names such as Laënnec should not be deprived of them. The biographical notes at times evade with amazing skill the one great contribution which a particular medical man or scientist made to his subject, even where the very medal described commemorates that contribution (see von Baer, Bichat, etc., and the Osler entry which makes no mention of the Osler Library or its famous catalogue). The sources quoted in these notes are not always the best nor the most authoritative and the bibliography on medical numismatics alone could be doubled in size by the addition of many important references, among them the invaluable and classic work of Moehsen.

The arrangement of the section of Local Societies might have presented fewer difficulties and anomalies if it had been divided into major national groups before giving alphabetical lists of towns and cities. As it is, Great Britain is followed by Idaho, Italy and London; the British Association appears under Great Britain, but the Royal Society of Health—which is just as 'national'—under London, and each is separated from the other by entries for Idaho and Italy.

The discerning reader will recognize these minor slips, errors of judgment, and gaps in bibliographical knowledge for what they are and acknowledge that they detract little from the usefulness of the work. The generous quota of illustrations—all beautifully reproduced—provide not only a check on the descriptions but also a rich source of portrait illustrations, some of them certainly among the best available of a particular subject. At least one reader will be making ample use of this catalogue in the preparation of the catalogue of another collection and will be very happy to acknowledge his indebtedness to Miss Freeman's splendid work.

F. N. L. POYNTER.

Mind and Body in Eighteenth Century Medicine: A Study based on Jerome Gaub's 'De regimine mentis', by L. J. RATHER, London, Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1965, pp. vii, 275, 30s.

It has been fashionable for many decades now to decry that form of medical literature called the 'Commentary' so commonly used by our predecessors; but how fruitful this form can still be when ingeniously and justifiably used.

Dr. Rather has contrived to present us with two works woven into one on the psychomatic medical ideas of the eighteenth century. The one consists of a very valuable translation of the two Essays of Jerome Gaub on the relation between