

Book Reviews

PATRICK COLLARD, *The development of microbiology*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. vii, 201, illus., £6.50.

The author bases his book on postgraduate lectures on the development of certain ideas in microbiology. Thus, each chapter deals with one topic, rather than a chronological sequence as is the usual way of presenting the history of a subject. The order of presentation is difficult to understand and seems to be quite arbitrary. Some historical order should have been preserved here, so that the section on serology and immunology founded in the nineteenth century preceded those on chemotherapy, antibiotics, and bacterial genetics, which are products of the twentieth.

There are chapters on virology and protozoology, with a note on mycology, but each is inadequate. A brief account of how microbiology has developed as a discipline and its influence on surgery (no mention of Lister in the index), public health and, industry would have been equally pertinent. Each chapter has a short list of important papers or books representing primary and secondary sources, but they are not keyed to the text.

Although it is of interest to have the main parts of microbiology dealt with separately, there is not sufficient cross-linking and the reader does not achieve an over-view of advancement. It would seem that each chapter represents a lecture, but with little reference in it to those preceding and those ensuing. Moreover there are a number of factual errors, especially in the material dealing with the early period (Hooke's microscope did not reach $\times 300 - \times 500$, p. 13) and distortions (Lister the elder is dismissed in three words, p. 15, and his name is not indexed, whereas he was of considerable importance in the history of microscopy). As a book for teacher-guided students this book may have a role, but those dealing with the history of microbiology already available seem to be quite adequate.

LEONARD J. GOLDWATER, *Mercury. A history of quicksilver*, Baltimore Md., York Press, 1972, 8vo, pp. xi, 318, illus., \$15.00.

The author has had lengthy experience with the problems of the use and abuse of mercury as seen in occupational medical practice, and is thus an ideal person to trace, as he does, the story of mercury from the earliest times to the present. He deals with it in medicine, science, and technology, and especially in the last two decades when increasing attention has been given to environmental pollution.

Part I is concerned with the occurrence of mercury, the technology of it, its early history, its early chemistry, and with its use in instruments. These are the physical aspects of the metal; and the second section surveys its pharmacology, toxicology, therapeutic uses, occupational poisoning, and its use in dentistry and veterinary medicine. Only about one-quarter of the book has to do with human medicine.

Research has been extensive, and references are made to a wide section of literature. Parts of the book, however, tend to be sequences of men's achievements concerning mercury, with little reference to events elsewhere in medicine, science or technology, which usually helps to deepen the historical perspective. The documentation is in reference form, not footnotes, but nevertheless provides a serviceable bibliography. Those studying the history of therapeutics will find Dr. Goldwater's treatise most useful.