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approach. Thus each chapter starts with a résumé of European history, followed by a brief account of the social position of surgeons, and then a rather longer exposition of surgical skills and practice. The strength of this work is twofold. First, it is thoroughly researched and replete with detail that can be trusted to be accurate. Second, although dealing with the major surgical traditions since antiquity, the chapters are heavily weighted in favour of Dutch material. These sections are undoubtedly the best in the book. Here the author has room to be expansive and interpretative, whereas the matter presented elsewhere often seems more familiar. When handling Dutch surgery, de Moulin presents ledgers, diaries, and visual evidence which are the fruits of his own research. It is the traditional structure of the book which, unfortunately, lets it down in some ways. National, social and technical histories are juxtaposed, but never interdigitate. No challenges are thrown out, or new questions posed. Similarly, there is an excellent bibliography but no critical bibliographical writing. In this regard it would be interesting to learn why the author omits to mention Owen and Sarah Wangansteen's splendid *The rise of surgery*, to which this volume forms such a valuable companion piece.

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J. M. H. MOLL, *The Heberden Society: histories, portraits and biographies*, London, Chapman and Hall Medical for the British Society for Rheumatology, 1987, 4to, pp. xxxii, 381, illus., £35.00 plus postage and packing from The British Society for Rheumatology, 41 Eagle Street, London WC1R 4AR, UK.

The desire to associate oneself with greatness is not confined to the medical profession. It is a feature of modern specialization that doctors devoted to individual organs or systems of the human body choose to dignify themselves with a connection to a distinguished figure from the past. Cardiologists have always claimed that father of clinical science, William Harvey, for their own, and British rheumatologists have chosen the elder William Heberden as their patron saint. Heberden, the physician Dr Johnson most admired, is remembered by medical historians for much more than his contributions to rheumatology. Nevertheless, when the Committee for the study and investigation of rheumatism became the Heberden Society in 1936, the appellation was, in the words of W. S. C. Copeman, to commemorate the celebrated eighteenth-century physician who gave early descriptions of rheumatism and gout and was the first to name the *digitorum nodi*, later known as "Heberden's nodes".

Dr Moll's book *The Heberden Society* is published in a limited edition of a thousand copies. It contains a historical introduction that gives a brief account of the life of William Heberden, with considerable emphasis on his descendants. The work goes on to describe the origins, growth, and development of the Heberden Society, and its ultimate incorporation into the British Society of Rheumatology in 1983. There are designs for the Society's tie, descriptions of its Annual Dinners, and even a reproduction of the menu card at the feast with which its members celebrated their last meeting.

The main part of the book, however, is taken up with more than a hundred pencil portraits by the author himself. All the Presidents, Orators, Roundsmen and Honorary Members of the Society are portrayed. Whilst lost in admiration for the author's indefatigable industry, and making no pretence to any virtue as an artistic critic, I have to confess to some dissatisfaction with the portrayal of many individuals whom I have known well, for example Lord Brain, Sir Francis Fraser, Eric Bywaters (a distinguished artist himself) and my colleague at the Clinical Research Centre, Dr Barbara Ansell. The portraits are, in general, of modest distinction. They are accompanied by the sort of biographical details appropriate to *Who's who* or to an obituary.

The book may well have some appeal for that group of nostalgic British rheumatologists who belonged to the Heberden Society. For the medical historian, it would be more worthwhile if it had included a comprehensive biographical account of Dr Heberden that did justice to the wide range of his interests and his specific involvement in matters to do with rheumatology. It would equally have been a more effective contribution to scholarship if the place of rheumatology in respect to other medical disciplines and the wider world had been examined. It is also curious that little is said of the

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important contributions made to British rheumatology by the Medical Research Council.

As with so many well-meant volumes of this sort, the book becomes more than a trifle self-congratulatory. I have no doubt that in this country the Heberden Society was a much-needed stimulus to the development of a group of professional rheumatologists, for whom the Society provided self-respect at a time when their speciality was held in low regard by such established disciplines as neurology or cardiology. Yet I would like, also, to have been told something of the undoubted scientific achievements of the distinguished members of the Heberden Society who represent the best in British rheumatology. Too often I am beset by a nagging doubt as to what through all these years has really been achieved for the sick and the suffering.

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JOHN H. APPLEBY, *A selective index to Siberian, Far Eastern, and Central Asian Russian materia medica*, Research Publications of the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, Oxford, No. VIII, Oxford, Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine (45–47 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PF, UK), 1987, 4to, pp. viii, 48, £4.50 (paperback).

For the past ten years Dr Appleby has been ploughing a rather lone but valuable furrow, laying bare the two-way traffic in medical knowledge that took place between Britain and Russia in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From the seeds sown in that work has now sprung this bibliographical guide to modern research on Russian *materia medica*, which the Wellcome Unit of Oxford has performed a general service by publishing.

The coverage is avowedly highly selective and limited to thirty-seven items: twenty-four plant species, eight medicines of animal origin, and the remainder mineral substances. A few entries are very brief, in view of the fact that these items have been covered adequately elsewhere; the rest extend to a short description of the species or substance in question, together with a note of its habitat and geographical distribution, an account of its pharmacology, and details of its uses. These last are keyed to references to literature listed in full in an appendix; in three cases (*Eleutherococcus*, ginseng and kumis) the keys are broken down under twenty or more headings. Bibliographies in the body of the text are supplied for items which have been written about more extensively.

An introduction places the subject in historical context by listing the principal eighteenth-century expeditions which laid the basis of scientific knowledge of the indigenous therapeutic resources; outlining the intensive efforts which the modern Soviet state, building on the Chinese concept of prophylaxis, has latterly put into systematically investigating these; and drawing attention to the potential value of this body of experience to the West.

It must have been a testing booklet to produce, yet appears to have emerged free of slips. Specialists in *materia medica* and pharmacology will surely find it a useful addition to their shelves.

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JENNIFER J. CARTER and JOAN H. PITTOCK (editors), *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*, Aberdeen University Press, 1987, 8vo, pp. x, 438, illus., £14.90 (paperback).

Scottish Enlightenment studies have long orbited around Edinburgh where, at least for some part of their lives, practically all the first-division literati and moralists lived. Indeed, a number of authors have gone so far as to identify the Scottish Enlightenment with Edinburgh itself and, perhaps following Peter Gay, others have localized the movement to a few magisterial Scottish thinkers. This collection of essays is a counterblast to this view, as well as a plea to take seriously the claim that Aberdeen was an important focus of Enlightenment culture. The papers were originally delivered at a conference and are now published as forty-three contributions