

Book Reviews

DAVIDA RUBIN (comp.), *Sir Kenelm Digby F.R.S. (1603–1665): a bibliography based on the collection of K. Garth Huston, Sr., M.D.*, San Francisco, Jeremy Norman, 1991, pp. xvi, 130, illus., \$95.00 (0–930405–29–3).

Having forgiven his significant contribution to quackery—the promotion of an infamous “powder of sympathy” that healed without coming into contact with the wound—historians in this century have worked successfully to establish Sir Kenelm Digby as one of the great early experimental philosophers. His reputation is now based primarily on his *Two treatises* (1644), in which an early defence of Harvey and revolutionary accounts of the nervous system and epigenesis are found in a work credited with introducing continental atomistic theories into England. He also wrote extensively on other subjects, including politics, literature, natural history and religion.

Tracking down nearly 150 editions of Digby’s twenty or so books, sometimes anonymous, sometimes published abroad, cannot have been an easy task, and the present bibliography is certainly the fullest and most detailed record of the *oeuvre* that has hitherto appeared. By the evidence presented in it, one work traditionally ascribed to Sir Kenelm, *The royall apologie* (1648), may with more reason be attributed to his brother George Digby (1612–1677). Most of the entries give adequate details of each book’s title, imprint, collation and pagination; significant variants have been noted; and general introductions to each title neatly summarize the nature and status of its contents.

Sadly, however, the end product is marred by two facts that should have been made explicit in the title. Firstly, the Californian anaesthesiologist Kenneth Garth Huston (1926–1987) was, naturally enough, unable to acquire all the books by, about, or relating to the object of his enthusiasm. Instead of using his collection as an unparalleled opportunity for further research, the editor takes only brief notice of editions not in Dr Huston’s library, and leaves some sections (on manuscript sources, and Digby’s own library, for example) manifestly incomplete. This fault springs no doubt from the other great disappointment facing the reader who expects a straight work of scholarship, namely that the bibliography is actually a disguised sales catalogue, in which many of the notes are put to the service of selling Dr Huston’s Digby collection in individual lots (prices available on request).

Gerald Beasley, Wellcome Institute Library

JANET GOLDEN and CHARLES E. ROSENBERG, *Pictures of health: a photographic history of health care in Philadelphia 1860–1945*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991, pp. xxix, 197, illus., \$49.95 (0–8122–8237–X), \$29.95 (paperback, 0–8122–1311–4).

Historians of American medicine have long acknowledged the standing of the University of Pennsylvania as the pre-eminent centre of medical education in the United States at least until the early years of the twentieth century. Yet health care in Philadelphia has never been exclusively the story of achievements at Penn; many other institutions, including Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia General Hospital, Medical College of Pennsylvania, Hahnemann Medical College, and Pennsylvania Hospital, have all made their distinctive contribution to the city’s unrivalled medical history.

Indeed, the most salient feature of *Pictures of health* is the institutional diversity displayed in myriad illustrations of nursing schools, laboratories, hospital wards, dispensaries, surgical clinics, maternity wards, bath houses, first aid rooms, mental asylums, and pharmacies. Formal portraits of prominent physicians are eschewed in favour of photographs of public health employees bustling about the slums, sanitation workers engaged in clean-up campaigns, tuberculosis patients clustered forlornly in deck chairs, tremulous children awaiting diphtheria immunization, and inquisitive medical students dissecting grisly corpses.

The authors of this fascinating book, in a series of percipient essays, demonstrate that the illustrations, despite their apparent informality, carried, nevertheless, a host of implied meanings. Cultural assumptions, as, for example, the segregation of blacks and women in medical practice and training, are embedded in photograph after photograph; structured

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relationships, whether in the operating theatre or among hospital administrative staff, are often explicit and rarely absent; while even the most innocuous illustrations of waiting rooms, hospital wards, and roof gardens reveal the therapeutic gap that separated the rich from the poor. Nor can the broader context be easily ignored: developments in medical technology, operating techniques, and diagnostic procedures all receive a due degree of attention as do the economic and social changes that, by the middle of the twentieth century, had re-made Philadelphia into the industrial metropolis of the United States.

In sum this book adds yet another thread to the rich tapestry that constitutes the past of one of America's most fascinating cities; every historian of American medicine will profit from a perusal of this absorbing volume.

Simon Baatz, University of Sussex

JEAN THÉODORIDÈS, *Des miasmes aux virus*, Paris, Éditions Louis Parientes, 1991, pp. 378, illus. (2-902474-64-4).

Until now, students of the history of infectious diseases of man, when legitimately anxious for professional information concerning the diseases which are central to their writing, have had no one volume of easily accessible facts to which to turn. Professor Théodoridès, director of research at the CNRS and at the same time among the most prolific of French historians of medicine, has come to the rescue with this handsome volume. In a lucid text, generously supported by a wealth of well chosen illustrations, it combines historical information and up-to-date scientific facts related to both the better and the lesser known infectious diseases of mankind.

In three introductory chapters Dr Théodoridès guides his readers through the development of general ideas in the pathology of infectious diseases—hence the title of the book—from the very early beliefs with their roots in magic and theosophy, to the giant steps towards understanding made in the nineteenth century. Of the remaining five chapters—at nearly 300 pages the majority of the book by far—each one is devoted to a major class of disease agents and the diseases they cause: spirochaetes, bacteria, rickettsiae and chlamydiae, viruses, and finally, and briefly, four “historic” epidemic ailments whose aetiology has never been satisfactorily determined. It is especially the four extensive chapters on individual diseases and their agents which make the present volume valuable as a work of reference. Each entry describes in detail the aetiology of the diseases and the properties of their pathogens, as well as the historical facts of the authors who first described each disease, and those who later isolated and identified its causal agent, and of others who added to the understanding of the disease and, where possible, developed a vaccine.

The numerous illustrations—there are few pages without one—have been chosen and prepared for this volume with great care. Many are reproduced from original documents or publications and as such add immeasurably to the text. Among the rarer items this reviewer particularly enjoyed the nineteenth-century French school class receiving re-vaccination, with the source of the lymph, a live calf, tied down on a table to one side; and the title page of Duchesne's so often forgotten thesis of 1897 with the sub-title ‘Antagonisme entre les moissures et les microbes’, which noted the inhibitory effect of *Penicillium* species on the growth of certain pathogenic bacteria, even *in vivo* in the guinea pig, decades before Fleming's similar discovery and its later practical development by Florey and associates.

In a short concluding section Dr Théodoridès outlines the evergreen questions which continue to be asked concerning the origins of micro-organisms, pathogenic and non-pathogenic. More than fifty years ago, Charles Nicolle speculated on the possible development of saprophytic microbes into pathogens for animals, and then for man. More recently, it is the origin of viruses, unable to replicate outside living cells, which has fired the collective imagination of microbiologists. Such problems promise to be with us for a long time to come.

A subject index would have been a welcome addition to the excellent author index provided, but is perhaps not in the French publishing tradition. In its absence, the reader has to search in