

Book Reviews

through the writings of individuals or obscure societies is lost. A further criticism and one that can be levied against all contemporary research is that the human angle is absent. While we give thanks and praise for the vast and expert assembly of facts and figures and the computers' accuracy, we miss the richness of the true historian or the truths of the social philosopher. A Sigerist would have mentioned the common man and his place in the development of this part of the welfare services. This book is valuable and very necessary and will be widely appreciated. But let us also still plead for the other historian who thinks deeply and writes alone and may we be fortunate enough to have the time and understanding to read him.

RUTH G. HODGKINSON

Die Assimilation der arabischen Medizin durch das lateinische Mittelalter, by HEINRICH SCHIPPERGES, (*Sudhoffs Arch. Gesch. Med.*, Suppl. 3), Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1964, pp. x, 240, DM. 40.

This study on the assimilation of Arabic Medical literature in the West during the Middle Ages comes to us under the highest auspices. It has been recommended by the Medical Faculty of the University of Bonn as a proof of the author's competence to lecture on the subject, has been accepted by the editorial board of *Sudhoff's Archiv*, and been printed with a subvention from the German research Institute. First written in 1959, it has since been revised, corrected and put into better order. It has every external guarantee, therefore, of providing new and valuable information on this fascinating subject, on which Dr. Schipperges has written some thirty articles during the past ten years.

The book is extremely well organized, grouping the diffused and widely disparate material methodically and systematically. It is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the reception of Arabic medical literature in Salerno through the medium of Constantine's translations, the reception of the new Aristotle and the assimilation of Greco-Arabic medicine in Toledo: the second concerning itself with scholastic centres such as Chartres, Paris, Oxford and Palermo, and the outstanding personalities at these centres, who were responsible for the introduction of these new streams of thought into Western Culture. Within this framework Dr. Schipperges, displaying a firm grasp of detail, sketches in large outline the salient characteristics of the literature which was brought to the notice of the West at that time. The book, therefore, is eminently practical for those who wish to learn something of the broad basis on which Arabic scientific learning penetrated into the Academic circles of Europe, and we are grateful to the author for having provided so clear and methodical a conspectus.

One had hoped, however, for a little more than this, for, good as the book is, it does not carry us much beyond the findings of Haskins and others of an earlier generation. In the preface mention is made of the manuscript material on which the study has been based, and about 400 manuscripts are listed at the end, many of which have been examined by the author. Unfortunately, very little, except the opening and closing lines of these manuscripts, is given in the text. This is a great loss. An analysis of the contents of these manuscripts or a comparison with the printed texts already available would have been invaluable. It would have enlarged our knowledge and stimulated further research. As it is, we remain as much in the dark as before. A great opportunity has been missed here, and we can only hope that Dr. Schipperges will undertake something on these lines in the future.

There is another disquieting feature to which, regretfully, attention must be drawn.

Book Reviews

Throughout the book there are numerous Latin quotations, sometimes taken from manuscripts, sometimes from printed books. In a high proportion of these there is at least one mistake in transcription. Some of these are due, presumably, to faulty proof-reading; but others are serious and make nonsense of the passage quoted. On p. 29, for instance, in recording a question of Petrus Hispanus on the *De Urinis* of Ysaac, we get the following words: *Tertia noctis estibilitatis*. . . . The correct reading should be: *Tertia vero digestibilitas*. On p. 41 the phrase *horum alieno emulantes laboravi* is meaningless: it should be *quidam horum alieno emulantes labori*, whilst the reference on the same page to the Viaticum of Constantine should read, *pre parvitate sui*, not *pre pravitate sui*. There are many others which could be mentioned. The worst of all is the passage at the bottom of p. 51, beginning *Rerum principio*, which utterly defies translation.

It would be ungracious to end on this note of criticism, for the book as a whole will be of the greatest use to students, but in the interests of accuracy it would be better if such blemishes could be eliminated from the future studies which, we feel sure, Dr. Schipperges will produce for our enlightenment.

C. H. TALBOT

The Royal Malady, by CHARLES CHENEVIX TRENCH, London, Longmans, 1964, pp. x, 245, 30s.

This book covers similar ground to J. W. Derry's *The Regency Crisis and the Whigs 1788-9*, reviewed in these columns 1964, 8, 195-6. It has the additional attraction for medical readers that the author pays more regard to clinical details and has adduced material from the diaries of two of the physicians in attendance on George III: Sir George Baker's, preserved in the family archives, and Dr. John Willis's in the British Museum. Unfortunately Mr. Chenevix Trench's knowledge of medicine and more particularly of psychiatry are not sufficient to allow him to make the best use of the facts. Such statements as of the first and least documented illness of 1765 that 'It was either a nervous breakdown, or an early attack of insanity' jar painfully.

But it is the second illness of 1788-9 and its political repercussions which are the book's main theme, and here there is ample information in contemporary diaries, correspondence, newspapers, parliamentary reports, and party squibs and scandal sheets. So much material and so much of it biased or gossipy or plain invention, interspersed with clinical observation couched in the language and theory of a bygone age, would intimidate even the expert patho-biographer. Mr. Chenevix Trench, however, soldiers on fearlessly, fording the rapids of medical doubt and controversy along the path mapped out by Dr. Manfred S. Guttmacher in *America's Last King* (New York, Scribner, 1941). This leads him to repeat uncritically and unquestioningly that hoary myth of twentieth-century medical historiography that 'the King's disorder was undoubtedly . . . of a manic-depressive type . . . caused by an underlying conflict exacerbated by violent frustrations'. Yet the evidence is as plain as a pikestaff that, as Mr. Chenevix Trench himself writes, 'Unquestionable [*sic*—one of the few misprints in the book] the King was, physically, a very ill man.' In fact, he was so long before psychiatric symptoms appeared, and this was well recognized by contemporaries but later ignored when his mental incapacity rather than his general health became the urgent concern of Government and country alike. And who, reading what his doctors did to him, can doubt but that he would have recovered his health and his senses much sooner had he not been purged and vomited, bled and blistered, isolated and intimidated.