

Book Reviews

those who would like to acquire a copy, but it is hoped that an English edition will be available before long.

S. W. A. GUNN

The Common Scientist in the Seventeenth Century. A Study of the Dublin Philosophical Society 1683–1708, by K. THEODORE HOPPEN, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, pp. xiv, 297, £2.75.

The foundation of the Royal Society in London in 1660 reflected the presence of a sizeable group of talented and active scientific men living in London or coming to the city frequently, who wanted a centre and focus for their deep scientific interests. The foundation of the Dublin Philosophical Society in 1683 reflects the wistful hope of a few moderately competent scientifically-oriented men that a formal society would necessarily generate more interest in science than was then known to exist in that very provincial city. The moving spirit was William Molyneux, subsequently author of two books on optics; both he and his brother Thomas, a successful Dublin physician, were to be elected F.R.S. and have several papers published in the *Philosophical Transactions*. The most distinguished member was Sir William Petty, still fitfully occupied with technological and scientific matters. Other members were theologians, there was one Professor of Mathematics (St. George Ashe), and (almost one third of the whole) there were eight physicians and one surgeon in 1684. The Society flourished only intermittently, never quite regaining its first impetus after its collapse in 1687, but struggling on until 1708.

Dr. Hoppen has presented a most scholarly study, solidly based on manuscript sources and wide reading. His work is full of useful information upon two or three dozen men who kept up an interest in scientific activity under difficult conditions. But even William Molyneux regarded Ireland as unsuitable for scientific work, and his son Samuel, after serving as the moving spirit in reviving the Society in 1707 (at the age of eighteen!) left for London a few years later. It is clear that there was not a sufficiently large group to sustain a scientific society, and indeed many members would have preferred a literary and theological debating society. The whole effect is somehow a trifle pathetic, showing how difficult it was at the end of the seventeenth century to stimulate an interest in science. The Molyneux family did best when its members sought stimulation by corresponding with members of the Royal Society, and were unconsciously fortunate when the disturbances of 1688 sent them and others of the Dublin Society to England and above all London.

MARIE BOAS HALL

Bibliography of Mediaeval Arabic and Jewish Medicine and Allied Sciences, by R. Y. EBIED, London, Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 1971, pp. 150, £2.00.

Historians will welcome this bibliography which covers the literature relating to Jewish and Arabian physicians of the Middle Ages and their contributions to medicine and medical sciences. The 2,000 entries are arranged in two main sections. The second (pp. 75–136) records not only the works of the medieval physicians but also critical writings about them; the first (pp. 27–74) lists contributions by modern authors which are relevant to the main theme. Original titles, if in Arabic or Hebrew,

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are translated, and works in Russian, Hungarian, Turkish, etc., are given in English transliteration.

Mr. Ebied's industry (400 periodicals were consulted together with all major sources, Festschriften, congress proceedings, etc.) and the generosity of the Wellcome Trust have given medieval historians an indispensable reference work.

COHEN OF BIRKENHEAD

Boerhaave and his Time, ed. by G. A. LINDEBOOM (Acta Boerhaaviana, No. 6), Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1970, pp. ix, 174, illus., 40 guilders.

In 1968 the tercentenary of Herman Boerhaave's birth was commemorated at Leyden with an International Symposium. This has now found permanency under the distinguished editorship of Dr. Lindeboom. The thirteen published contributions—nine in English, three in German and one in French—cast much helpful light upon one of the most paradoxical figures in the history of medicine. For although Boerhaave made no notable discoveries in any field, he had an enormous and lasting influence on medicine, chemistry, botany and general philosophy.

During his lifetime Boerhaave was revered throughout the Western World and received pilgrimages from many of the leading cognoscenti of his day (including the Emperor of all the Russias). Yet this humble, self-effacing physician apparently only once made a journey outside the Leyden area—an expedition to defend his doctoral thesis at Harderwijk, less than sixty miles away. His evident determination to remain in one place was, however, the only major circumstance in which he differed from a modern professor of medicine. Boerhaave was indeed the first of this breed, and his eternal fame in medicine will rest upon his inauguration of modern clinical teaching at the bedside extending where necessary to post-mortem examination, together with his construction of a new medical science which embodied all that seemed best in the physical and biological sciences of the day.

Boerhaave's great skill as a systematist is fully dealt with in this book by historians of chemistry and botany as well as medicine. In each of these fields Boerhaave's definitive textbooks had remarkably long active careers. His influence on botanical thought is probably least well known, and is delightfully presented by Dr. William Stearn. Apart from Boerhaave's own impressive *Index alter Plantarum* we learn of a small book by Sébastien Vaillant for which Boerhaave provided the impetus. This book revealed the hidden sexuality of the plant world so vividly that Uittien has complained 'ses comparaisons soient parfois un peu risquées', while at the time it fired the imagination of the adolescent Carl Linnaeus. Linnaeus's subsequent visit to Boerhaave led among other things to the young botanist securing his all-important Anglo-Dutch patron, George Clifford.

The influence of Boerhaave on medicine is dealt with by many of the contributors, but, understandably, little attention is paid to his tremendous impact on British medicine. As Charles Singer has said 'through his pupils he is the real founder of the Edinburgh Medical School, and through it of the best medical teaching in the English-speaking countries of the World'. It is interesting to trace the progress of medical teaching in the universities of Leyden and Edinburgh both of which were founded within a period of eight years in the second half of the sixteenth century.