

### Book Reviews

Deeply religious, he dedicated his life to the medical mission, working eighteen or twenty hours a day, couching cataracts, delivering obstructed foetuses, cutting for stones, lancing abscesses, and performing those myriad other minor medical activities that alleviate illness or postpone death. All this for a pittance, much of which he reinvested in the hospital. Cook, who was a doctor of great ability, would have amassed a fortune in Harley Street. He was rewarded with a knighthood late in life, but as a young man all the job offered was spiritual fulfilment and death from blackwater fever.

Foster's unfolding of Cook's diaries is a meticulous study of the sort of forces that could sustain a man's almost suicidal sense of mission and his ability to act it out in an utterly hostile environment. One of these forces, of course, was Cook's belief, but equally sustaining on a day-to-day basis was the capacity to transfer the English social system to the jungle without compromising it one bit. "One feels a little prejudiced against Miss H. on account of a very pronounced cockney accent but they say she improves on acquaintance and, of course, a mere tone of voice doesn't make much difference to spiritual work." (p. 96). The "much" speaks volumes. Tea, tennis, the umbrella and the *British Medical Journal* were all in Uganda from the start. Failure to endorse their role could mean failure of the mission itself. "One notices that the kind of recruit furnished by the CMS lately, especially the female line, is very far inferior physically to the senior ladies of the mission who had to face the three month march up country. One of the latest arrivals cannot play tennis..." (p.116).

Against the backdrop of change in Europe, two world wars, the invention of radio, aeroplanes, Cook's indefatigable energy wrought major changes in Ugandan medicine, including the building of a large hospital, and the instauration of a midwifery school. A totally self-confident, compassionate man with an unsophisticated but "tremendous belief in the British Empire" (p. 231), Cook's life provokes judgements Foster rightly resists. This is an excellent biography, not least because of its humour. I hope it reaches the wide readership it deserves.

ELISABETH BENNION, *Antique medical instruments*, London, Philip Wilson for Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1978, 4to, pp. xii, 355, illus., £28.00.

The title of this book is misleading. Most of it deals with surgical instruments, the rest with surgical and medical appliances. The time-span is from the Middle Ages to the onset of the antiseptic age (1870), and material from a large number of collections is surveyed. Dental and veterinary instruments are included, and there are also examples of medical receptacles, infant and invalid feeding utensils, toilet articles, etc. The production is elegant with a plethora of illustrations, sixteen of which are in colour. An introductory history of the medical profession is, however, superficial, inadequate, and at times erroneous. It is also unbalanced, as it deals mainly with British medicine and one is not surprised to find that the works cited in the Bibliography are entirely English or American. The Chronology Chart is also curious in regard to the names included; thus Clifford Allbutt is listed as a surgeon.

However, although the author may not be fully proficient in medical history, she is well-versed in her knowledge of the instruments and appliances themselves. Her book will therefore be of interest to the auctioneer, the dilettante collector, and the amateur

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medical historian. For others it is too limited in content and time-span, too textually superficial, and clearly the product of a non-medical individual. The topic is so large that collaboration would have been the only way to have made this attractive picture-book a professional treatise.

MAURICE CROSLAND, *Gay-Lussac. Scientist and bourgeois*, Cambridge University Press, 1978, 8vo, pp. xvi, 333, front., £15.00.

The name Gay-Lussac is widely known, due mainly to its use for degrees of strength of alcoholic liquors. A critical examination of the man (1778-1850) and his work, however, has had to await this excellent book by Professor Crosland, the renowned British historian of chemistry. Gay-Lussac is especially famous for his discovery of the law of combination of gases, one of the basic concepts of chemistry today. He also achieved several important advances in electro-chemistry, and he was one of the nineteenth-century giants who helped to make science a profession.

Crosland's book is a scholarly work dealing not only with its central character, but also with the social, economic, industrial, and political aspects of French society in the first half of the nineteenth century. It will remain for some years the definitive biography of a man who has so far been given inadequate attention. It will deservedly find a wide audience.

DOROTHY KOENIGSBERGER, *Renaissance man and creative thinking. A history of concepts of harmony 1400-1700*, Hassocks, Sussex, Harvester Press, 1979, 8vo, pp. xiii, 282, £13.50.

To encompass the breadth of learning adequately to understand the progression of the Renaissance thought is no easy task. The author believes that the doctrine of universal harmony was an essential component of the period. This harmony was to be found in music and natural philosophy, as well as between man and god, mind and nature. To attest this she calls on Renaissance individuals such as Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci, and Nicholas of Cusa to illustrate her thesis, and uses magic, music, and universality to do likewise. The harmony is to be appreciated intuitively, and to understand it an analysis of the concepts of the chief Renaissance figures is therefore supplied. Thus architecture, mathematics, physiology of the circulation, the origins of Newtonian philosophy, and anatomy, in addition to those already mentioned, are considered. Dr. Koenigsberger's book is not easy to read, but it is fully documented and it provides an excellent survey of a most exciting yet most complex era. Those concerned with medicine and science of the Renaissance and beyond will find it of great value. Unfortunately the index is grossly inadequate.

G. A. LINDEBOOM, *Descartes and medicine*, Amsterdam, Editions Rodopi, 1978, 8vo, pp. 134, illus., Dfl. 30.00 (paperback).

Despite the fact that Descartes (1596-1650) was not a physician he had a deep and lasting effect on the development of medicine. Professor Lindeboom, the distinguished Dutch physician and historian of medicine, aims in this book to describe this impact in the centuries after his death. It is an introduction to the study of Descartes' attitude to medicine and his contacts and relations with physicians in Holland, where he lived for