

### *Book Reviews*

literature to describe these people and their various activities, with a diversity of illustrations. He also deals with witches, astrologers, alchemists, and with Bridewell and Bedlam. There is, therefore, a good deal of interesting material here for those who are interested in sixteenth-century medicine. It is, however, a pity that the text is not documented, and the section, 'A note on books', occupies only two pages.

JANE O'HARA-MAY, *Elizabethan Dyetary of health*, Lawrence, Kansas, Coronado Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. 415, illus., \$18.50.

Dr. O'Hara-May is one of the small group of historians of medicine who are dealing with a vast and important area of medical history. At the moment, this is inadequately explored and many topics remain unresearched. Until now, one of these was an aspect of Elizabethan life which has received little attention despite the proliferation of Elizabethan studies during the last two or three decades. As the author points out, medicine of the period in general, and in particular the large amount of health advice to be found in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English books, has so far been neglected. Her objective, therefore, is to provide a summary of contemporary ideas concerning the preservation of health appearing in books published between 1500 and 1699, but originating in ancient writings. It is, however, by no means a list of dietary suggestions. In addition to being well versed in modern nutritional science, Dr. O'Hara-May has a wide and deep knowledge of the history of medicine and science, and it is against a background of medical theory that she sets out her scholarly survey. In the first part of the book the more general aspects of dietary advice are given, and in the second, individual foods, beverages, herbs, spices, etc., receive attention. In a postscript a most useful and fascinating comparison is made between Elizabethan and modern approaches to diet. As well as copious end-notes, there are lists of primary and secondary sources.

Dr. O'Hara-May must be congratulated for having prepared an original and pioneering treatise of high scholarship, which represents an important contribution to a part of the history of medicine where much more research is needed.

FRANKLIN H. PORTUGAL and JACK S. COHEN, *A century of DNA. A history of the discovery of the structure and function of the genetic substance*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. xiii, 384, illus., £12.25.

Watson and Crick's double helical model of the DNA molecule was the culmination of decades of research, extending back to the isolation of "nuclein" in 1869 by Miescher. This book tells the absorbing story by dealing mainly with the experimental research, the ideas, and the men concerned with them. It seems that the lengthy period of gestation was simply due to a lack of adequate techniques and technology.

On the whole, the authors give a fair and dispassionate account, which is based on oral as well as literary sources. The narrative is readily readable, despite the complex nature of the material, and there is full documentation of sources. The book can, therefore, be strongly recommended as an accurate survey of one of the most outstanding biological advances of the century.