

Book Reviews

measured by improvements of drug standards in the 1898 *British Pharmacopoeia* (e.g. increasing recognition of the value of the microscope). However, these advances only really bore fruit in the 1914 *British Pharmacopoeia* where, for instance, ash values and the histology of powders were conspicuous for the first time. (That interest in powder histology developed so late despite the early recognition of nefarious practices by the drug grinders is a subject deserving full study.) The 1914 *British Pharmacopoeia*, it should be added, was so markedly superior to its predecessors that it is perhaps unfortunate that the author has not taken this as a terminal date for his study.

It must be remembered that developments in the science of pharmacognosy, as part of the Pharmaceutical Society's enterprises in education, did not affect the average practising pharmacist—or at least most of those who did not attend the Society's school. Nevertheless it is a pity that the role of the average practitioner—medical as well as pharmaceutical—could not have been given more space by Stieb. It would have helped in discussing the extent of adulteration and, in particular, the role of individuals (where only Accum, Hassall, Postgate and Wakley are considered).

There was probably much truth in the 1856 statement of the Directors of The General Apothecaries' Company (formed soon after the 1855 Select Committee Report on food and drug adulteration) that 'many pharmaceutical Chemists are better instructed now than formerly, and doubtless a large proportion of them conscientiously endeavour to avoid the sale of spurious and adulterated drugs'. Certainly it seems significant that when chemists and druggists were endeavouring to create an organized profession many were advertising the purity of their drugs. The General Apothecaries' Company, like the older Liverpool Apothecaries' Company (the provinces must not be forgotten), was founded 'for the purpose of securing to the profession and the public a supply of unadulterated drugs and chemicals'. It is interesting that both companies appointed a 'scientific chemist' whose duties included analysis. However, just how successful these enterprises were in terms of the provision of good quality drugs has not been ascertained. Nor has there been an assessment of the role of the pharmaceutical industry in general; there is good reason to believe that some companies at least supplied good quality drugs and chemicals for there were a number of quaker businesses with men of the calibre of the celebrated William Allen.

The above comments are not offered as criticism of omissions in the book under review, but as a reminder that some of the threads of an extremely complex story are not apparent in the author's particular approach to the subject. Yet as it stands the book—a pioneering achievement—is of inestimable value, a value which is enhanced with a particularly comprehensive bibliography (included in the 102 pages of notes) which, like the text, can only occasionally be faulted or, in questions of interpretation, queried.

The book is based on a Ph.D. thesis by Stieb and provides another monument to the scholarship of the history of pharmacy which has issued from the University of Wisconsin in the last few decades.

J. K. CRELLIN.

The Story of William Hunter, by CHARLES ILLINGWORTH, Edinburgh and London, E. & S. Livingstone, 1967, pp. viii, 134, illus., 35s.

Book Reviews

In spite of the mass of papers both printed and in manuscript belonging or relating to William Hunter, his work and achievements, information about his private life, his household, nature, beliefs, and pastimes, is surprisingly scant. Sir Charles Illingworth's biography is the more remarkable, therefore, for making the subject appear as a real person. The way that this has been done is to make full use of such documents as reveal his thoughts and ambitions and, as the author states in the Preface, 'I have written it in the first person to be able to give a more intimate picture of the man and for the same reason I have made free use of expressions and forms of speech taken verbatim from his own writings'. The book contains much interesting and valuable information about eighteenth-century London, its people, architecture and events, as well as a useful background of national and international history. There are 184 references to original sources; a complete list of William Hunter's publications and three other valuable appendices: a record of the five known portraits and four engravings; a list of the biographies which consist of six full-length publications and eight short notices; and a detailed account of students' notes of his lectures and their whereabouts. Unfortunately Section 2 of Appendix D contains details of only one set of volumes in the Library of the Royal College of Surgeons of England; the full holding includes a dozen more, together with two sets in which some of the notes are from lectures given by William Hewson.

The illustrations are excellent, consisting of twenty plates of which three are in colour: an illumination from the *de Consolatione Philosophiae* (1385) of Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius; another from the York Psalter (c. 1173); and part of a page from Cicero's *de Officiis*, the first dated edition of any classical author (printed at Mainz in 1465, on Gutenberg's original press by Schoeffer, one of his assistants, who married the daughter of Fust or Faust, the lawyer immortalized by Goethe), all from William Hunter's own collection.

The author has been commendably restrained, even regarding those events which would provide rich material for sensational anecdote. No more than reasonable assumptions have been made where facts have been lacking and he is careful not to exaggerate the relationship between the two brothers, particularly in regard to the disagreement between them in the matter of the placenta.

William Hunter has been neglected by medical historians in comparison with his brother John. Sir Charles Illingworth's book has done much to make good this deficiency and will, it is hoped, reawaken interest in him not only as one of the leading gynaecologists of the eighteenth century but also as a pioneer in the promotion of reform and improvement in medical education.

The author is to be congratulated upon this work; the production is in the customary excellent style of E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. The only serious drawback is that the index is rendered of less value by lack of detail and many omissions.

JESSIE DOBSON.

The Midwife and the Witch, by THOMAS R. FORBES, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1966, pp. xii, 195, illus., 48s.

Folk-lore is perhaps the most difficult subject on which to write. It is not difficult to define, the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* has it as 'beliefs, legends and customs of the