

Book Reviews

disturbed individuals. Many of Napier's patients believed themselves bewitched or possessed, and although Napier himself used occult procedures in making diagnoses – casting horoscopes or conjuring up the Archangel Raphael – he approached his patients with a subtle blend of shrewdness and common sense. For Napier, the “supernatural” was just as real as the “natural”.

Macdonald's discussions of religion, magic, and witchcraft complement those of Keith Thomas, to whom he acknowledges his indebtedness. Like Thomas, he finds a perceptible decline in the pervasiveness of fervent religious belief as the seventeenth century turned into the eighteenth and doctors and liberally-minded clergymen viewed as disease the religious enthusiasms of an earlier generation. For the insane, he contends, the triumph of the rational, scientific outlook of the Enlightenment was “a disaster” (p. 230). This probably overstates the case, for our own knowledge of eighteenth-century psychiatry is still limited. We need a Macdonald of the Enlightenment: someone who will go beyond the caricatures and stereotypes for that period as he has so eloquently achieved for the age of Robert Burton and Richard Napier.

It is a shame that the Cambridge University Press have seen fit to stick so appalling a price on a book which deserves such wide circulation.

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WALTER HOFFMANN-AXTHELM, *History of dentistry*, Berlin and Chicago, Quintessence Publishing Co., 1981, 8vo, pp. 435, illus., \$100.00.

The first part of this beautifully produced book deals with the development of dentistry from earliest times to its establishment as an independent profession in the eighteenth century. Successive chapters describe dental procedures and dental cures in ancient Egypt, India, China and Japan, pre-Columbian America, Greece and Rome, the Byzantine Kingdom and Europe in the Early Middle Ages, Islam, the High and Late Middle Ages, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and finally the eighteenth century. The second part of the book concentrates on dentistry in the industrial age and describes the rapid advances which have been made in prosthetics, conservative dentistry, dental surgery, orthodontics, and in research and teaching. Each chapter has a comprehensive list of references, and the 529 illustrations provide a splendid complement to the wealth of information in the text. Descriptions of early dental operations abound, together with cures for toothache ranging from a mixture of earthworms, frog hearts, and rabbit brains to the eleven cautery points on the body (but not the head) shown in a thirteenth-century manuscript in the Bodleian Library. The causes of dental disease were not understood, and as late as the eighteenth century it was believed that worms caused decay from within the tooth. However, the last hundred and fifty years have seen the application of scientific method to the diagnosis and treatment of oral diseases, and the development of materials for repairing decayed teeth and replacing lost ones by fixed bridges or removable dentures. The author has given an excellent account of the main landmarks in this period with interesting details of the leading personalities and of their work. An example is his description of the early experiments with general anaesthesia and the tragic deaths of Horace Wells, the first to demonstrate nitrous oxide, and of William Morton and Charles Jackson who used ether and then quarrelled bitterly and expensively over their respective claims for priority. The work of John Tomes, Charles Tomes, and other British dentists is described, and there is an illustration of the Dental Hospital of London in Soho Square in 1858.

No-one with any interest in dentistry or in dental history should miss the pleasure of reading this book; it reveals the rapid development of a profession after centuries practically bereft of progress, and provides an ideal base for further reading and research. Libraries should buy the book, many individuals will want to, in spite of the price.

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