BOOK REVIEWS AND JOURNAL NOTES

Mestler’s Introduction, which includes (p. 11-17) the finest essay we have seen on the subject of medico-biographical studies in the tradition of Platter’s Observationum in hominus affectibus, Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy, and later works down to modern times.

This memorial publication of Dr. Gilbert’s consuming hobby is a very useful contribution to medical, literary, and historical bibliography. Students of future generations will ever respect the quality and volume of his labors as they benefit from hours of time he will have saved them.

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Félix Martí-Ibáñez’ literary cornucopia overflows again. His latest offering consists of forty-two essays on a wide range of topics which reflect his interests in literature, travel, the arts, and medical history. The collection is appropriately entitled. These pieces are highly personalized and romantic in spirit. Like Ariel, they are also a little elusive and sometimes insubstantial. They partake of the highly seasoned flavor of MD magazine and have the unmistakable feel of glossy paper.

Having read the author’s previous Centaur and A Prelude to Medical History, this reviewer could not avoid the sensation of deja vu. Many of the selections are revisions or, in some instances, paraphrases of material published in these earlier works. So much is this the case that one may question how often the same old wine—even a good vintage—can be justifiably rebottled under new and fancy labels. The author cannot under such circumstances expect the same respectful attention to his ideas.

The first group of essays deals with Martí-Ibáñez’ preferences in “recreational” and “pleasurable” reading. These choices are, as they ought to be, opinionated and sensitively interpreted. They indicate a considerable familiarity with the world of letters and a genuine enthusiasm for things literary. Especially impressive is the author’s communication of the individuality of the reading experience. Unfortunately, there is an excess of superlatives, and some of the encomiums seem misplaced.

Where the nature of the subject is congenial to the author’s imaginative interpretation and inventiveness, his essays become convincing and stimulating. The articles on symbolism in medicine and in oriental rugs, for example, are informative accounts of man’s efforts to communicate some of his deeper feelings in signs and representations. Equally attractive is the warm tribute to Henry Sigerist. Here, the uniqueness and greatness of the subject are more than equal to Martí-Ibáñez’ ardor. The result is a per-
ceptive and intelligent interpretation of a very great historian of medicine. Equally suited to the author's style are the essays entitled “To Be A Doctor” and the group headed “Journeys, Ports and Peoples.”

Less suited to the author's method, however, is the history of medicine which is surveyed in thirteen pieces entitled “The Epic of Medicine.” In title and content they closely parallel *A Prelude to Medical History* published last year. These essays assault the mind with an efflorescence of language, metaphor, and symbol. They will serve best if they invite the reader to more sustained browsing in the garden of medical history.

The remaining selections are reflections on subjects as various as the marvels of the human hand, Casanova, letter writing, and medicine as anthropology.

It would be a pity to discourage the writing or reading of essays, especially ones as titillating as some of these. But, Dr. Martí-Ibáñez has already said these things well in *Centaur*. To repeat his theme with only slight variations in tone is to abuse the privilege of the encore. Repetition may be the mother of studies, but it can be the death of letters.

This assortment as a whole is like a tray of appetizers. It should be taken in small doses as a prelude to more substantial fare. It can induce early surfeit if indulged in too heavily. If the reader can adjust to the continuous fortissimo and the bravura style, he will find these pieces pleasant, occasionally original, and always colorful.

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This is a report from the Joint Study Committee on Continuing Medical Education, which is sponsored by the American Medical Association, the Association of American Medical Colleges, the American Academy of General Practice, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Physicians, the American Hospital Association, and the American Psychiatric Association. Although the American College of Surgeons was represented at the initial meeting of major medical organizations called by the AMA to consider this subject, the group is not listed as a sponsor of the study. The report purports to be “a conceptual and practical blueprint for the provision of equal, coordinated, educational opportunities throughout the country for those physicians who need, want, and will continue their lifetime postgraduate learning.” There is a statement of the problem by John Z. Bowers, Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Medical Education*, which also