

Book Reviews

A history of the American Medical Association, 1847-1947.

Morris Fishbein. Philadelphia-London: W. B. Saunders, 1947. Pp. xvi + 1226. (Illustrated.) \$10.00.

This revealing volume is not a critical analysis of the development of the most important medical organization in the United States, but rather a chronology of its activities during its first century of existence, as abstracted from its *Transactions*. Projected in 1929, the satisfactory compilation of the book was delayed by World War II. It was pushed to publication for the centennial meeting of the AMA in May 1947 by the driving efforts of Dr. Fishbein with hurried dictation, scissors, and paste. The result is sometimes reminiscent of the famous "Tonics and Sedatives" section of the *Journal of American Medical Association*, which Dr. Fishbein has edited so well since 1924. Dr. W. L. Bierring's accounts of the 101 presidents of the Association are customary professional eulogies. Various Association officials offer short sketches of the many councils, bureaus, publications, and other special activities of the Association. From these it is clear that, in contrast to its first 50 years, the second half-century of the AMA has been extremely successful in a practical and financial sense. There are chronological data in appendixes, and there are name and subject indexes.

The American Medical Association arose a century ago in response to serious abuses in medical education and practice. The rapid expansion of the country, with the resulting need for many doctors, caused a mushroom growth of medical schools and a large output of unsatisfactory and unqualified physicians. A number of abortive attempts were made to form a national organization of competent medical men, in order to raise standards of medical education and of medical ethics. Thanks to the persistence and skill of Nathan Smith Davis (1817-1904) of Binghamton, New York, this was accomplished. An organizational meeting was held in May 1846, in New York, and the first convention with delegates took place the following year in Philadelphia. The Association has consistently maintained a democratic organization through delegates elected by State Medical Societies. After a century of intensive effort, it is clear that the prime purpose of the AMA in raising standards of medical education has been brilliantly achieved. Unfortunately, there still remains much confusion about "medical ethics." However, the majority of physicians are agreed regarding their standards of professional etiquette and general morality, and this is an important advance. There is now growing appreciation that general principles of ethical conduct are more significant than a multiplicity of detailed rules.

An outstanding public contribution of the AMA has been the gradual suppression of medical quackery. This part of the story is told with relish, and with details of libel suits brought by various quacks as a result of published AMA reports. There is also much in justification of the AMA's stand on "socialized medicine."

The official centennial story of the Association is an interesting social document for scientists. It illustrates the difficulties and disappointments inherent in the development of large

professional organizations, and suggests the wisdom of frequent, honest, and good-natured self-criticism in such organizations for the promotion of professional standards and practices.

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Scientific Book Register

BOYD, WILLIAM C. *Fundamentals of immunology*. (2nd ed.) New York-London: Interscience, 1947. Pp. xvi + 503. (Illustrated.) \$6.00.

BRUES, CHARLES T. *Insects & human welfare*. (Rev. ed.) Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1947. Pp. xiii + 154. (Illustrated.) \$2.50.

COPELAND, EDWIN BINGHAM. *Genera Filicum: the genera of ferns*. Waltham, Mass.: Chronica Botanica; New York: Stechert-Hafner, 1947. Pp. xiv + 247. (Illustrated.) \$6.00.

DYK, WALTER. *A Navaho autobiography*. (Publ. in Anthropology, No. 8.) New York: Viking Fund, 1947. Pp. 218. (Illustrated.) \$3.00.

EAMES, ARTHUR J., and MACDANIELS, LAURENCE H. *An introduction to plant anatomy*. (2nd ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947. Pp. xvii + 427. (Illustrated.) \$4.50.

GLAESSNER, MARTIN F. *Principles of micropalaeontology*. New York: John Wiley, 1947. Pp. xvi + 296. (Illustrated.) \$6.00.

JAGGAR, T. A. *Origin and development of craters*. (Geological Society of America, Memoir 21.) Baltimore, Md.: Waverly, 1947. Pp. xvii + 508. (Illustrated.) \$6.00.

JOSEPHY, E., and RADT, F. (Eds.) *Elsevier's encyclopaedia of organic chemistry*. (Vol. 13, *Tricyclic compounds: Series III, Carboisocyclic compounds*.) New York-Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1946. Pp. xx + 1265. Single vol., \$104.00; serial price, \$91.00; subscription price, \$78.00.

LASKOWITZ, I. B. *Designs for helicopters*. Brooklyn, N. Y.: I. B. Laskowitz, 284 Eastern Parkway, 1947. Pp. 23. (Illustrated.) \$2.00.

MIGRDICHIAN, VARTKES. *The chemistry of organic cyanogen compounds*. (American Chemical Society Monograph Series.) New York: Reinhold, 1947. Pp. ix + 460. \$12.00.

SLIJPER, E. J. *Comparative biologic-anatomical investigations on the vertebral column and spinal musculature of mammals*. Amsterdam, Holland: N. V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers-Maatschappij, 1946. Pp. 128. (Illustrated.)

TOMKINS, SILVAN S. *The thematic apperception test: the theory and technique of interpretation*. New York: Grune & Stratton, 1947. Pp. xi + 297. \$5.00.

WITT, J. C. *Portland cement technology*. Brooklyn, N. Y.: Chemical Publishing Co., 1947. Pp. 518. \$10.00.

WOLFF, WERNER. *What is psychology: a basic survey*. New York: Grune & Stratton, 1947. Pp. xii + 410. (Illustrated.) \$4.00.