

## NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

### THE EDINBURGH DISPENSATORIES

THE PHARMACY LIBRARY has three editions of the *Edinburgh New Dispensatory*. One, a sixty-page fragment, is probably either from the third edition published in Edinburgh in 1792, or a "new" edition published in Edinburgh in 1799. (No other copy of either has been located for purposes of comparison.) The second is "the third American from the fourth Edinburgh edition," published at Walpole, N.H., in 1796. The third is the sixth edition, published in Edinburgh in 1801. The last two were edited by John Rothram, the first either by him or by Andrew Duncan, Sr.

These volumes are part of a series edited by various members of the "faculty" at Edinburgh. First called the *New Dispensatory* and then the *Edinburgh New Dispensatory*, they are known collectively as the "Edinburgh Dispensatories." In the century from 1753 to 1847 no less than thirty-five British, six American, and twelve foreign-language (German, French, Dutch, Italian, Portuguese) editions or printings of some kind were issued. These included the reprinting of the Dispensatory as the articles on "Pharmacy" and "Materia Medica" in the second (1780, 1781) and third (1797) editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and in the American printing of the latter (which the Rutgers Library has) called *Encyclopaedia, or a Dictionary of the Arts, Sciences and Miscellaneous Literature* (Philadelphia, 1798).

Moreover these Dispensatories "were laid under heavy contributions"

by many plagiarizing savants. Thus not only was the *Edinburgh New Dispensatory* the first dispensatory published in America (A "new" edition, Philadelphia, 1791), but it was the basis for J. R. Coxe's *American Dispensatory*, first published in Philadelphia in 1806, and J. Thacher's *American New Dispensatory*, first published in Boston in 1810. The Edinburgh Dispensatories were therefore the direct ancestors of the present voluminous *Dispensatory of the United States*.

The unbroken chain of Edinburgh Dispensatories makes this series of more than bibliographic interest. The medical historian interested in the history of particular drugs or diseases cannot overlook them. Nor can the historian of chemistry neglect to investigate the impact of the inclusion, after 1791, of a "clear and full account of the new chemical doctrines . . . [of] Mr. Lavoisier."

But their real significance lies in the general picture of the gains and limitations of 18th and early 19th century medicine. Slowly the relics of ancient superstition and ignorance were being discounted, and earthworms, snails, ants, musk, dung, frog's spawn, and such, although still mentioned, were being cast aside. Perhaps this was due to observable failure of such remedies, perhaps because of questions of good taste, or perhaps because the Enlightenment finally reached the medical profession. But the traditional, authoritarian, and empirical basis of medical practice is obvious, and its recency rather startling. It is not simply coincidental that

the Edinburgh Dispensatories came to an end at a time when the biological sciences were beginning to revolutionize the medical art.

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*THE N.J. PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION PROCEEDINGS*

THE LIBRARY has recently consolidated its holdings of the *Proceedings of the New Jersey Pharmaceutical Association* and has had the issues still lacking photostatically reproduced. Thus there is now, at the Pharmacy Library, a complete file of the *Proceedings* dating back to the Association's founding in 1870. The incomplete file at New Brunswick has been augmented by microfilms of the *Proceedings* of 1871-1881 inclusive and of 1885. The Association, at its Trenton office, has the only known complete file of the original publications.

The *Proceedings* contain faithful, often verbatim, accounts of the meetings of the Association; committee reports; the reports of the Board of Pharmacy; a plethora of "papers" on a wide range of professional, scientific,

and business subjects; descriptions of social activities; membership lists; a few photographs; obituaries; and advertisements, frequently illustrated.

There is therefore a wealth of material in this eighty-year microcosm of New Jersey and American history, much of it of significance to others than the pharmaceutical-medical historians. The student interested in the impact of big business, or the development of price-maintenance formulas, or the work of a pressure group, or the recreation habits of Americans, or the assimilation of ethnic groups, or the popularization of the telephone, and much more, can find much primary and profitable material. So could the biographer—and it is an interesting commentary on the American mind that although Fred B. Kilmer stands out of the pages of the *Proceedings* in heroic proportions as an intelligent, industrious, and successful leader in the finest American tradition, his family name is perpetuated in the New Brunswick area because of a single poem written by his son.

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