

In fact, Dr. Nordenskjöld's course of lectures is too short for all the valuable ideas it contains.

Dr. Mecking's book occupies the greater part of this volume. Beyond a few general chapters it is occupied with regional descriptions. It is a useful storehouse of facts enhanced by good photographs and a bibliography which is serviceable but not complete. Many minor matters would bear corrections, but complete accuracy is perhaps unobtainable in a book covering so wide an area. The statement that the polar landscape is "the quintessence of monotony in form and colour" could not have been written by anyone with a wide experience of polar regions.

R. N. R. B.

History of Medicine.

A Short History of Medicine: introducing Medical Principles to Students and Non-Medical Readers. By Dr. Charles Singer. Pp. xxiv + 368. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1928.) 7s. 6d. net.

THE numerous readers of NATURE, medical and otherwise, who are familiar with Dr. Singer's valuable contributions to the history of medicine, will welcome the appearance of this volume in which he has admirably succeeded in his attempt to trace the history of medicine as "a Rational Discipline involving many and perhaps all the sciences."

The work is divided into six chapters of unequal length, devoted respectively to Greek medicine down to the year 300 B.C., the Heirs of Greece, including the Alexandrian School and medicine in the Roman Empire, with special reference to Galen; the Middle Ages from about A.D. 200 to about A.D. 1500; the rebirth of science from about 1500 to about 1700; the period of consolidation from 1700 to 1825; and the period of subdivisions from 1825 down to the present day.

Although the author lays stress on the fact that the narration of the earlier times is so condensed that more than half the book is devoted to modern medicine, ample justice is done to the earlier workers. Not only is the debt of medicine to the Greeks and their contemporaries recognised, but also the important part played by the Romans in the organisation of medical science is emphasised, especially in departments relating to public health.

The chapter on the Middle Ages contains a description of the period of depression from about A.D. 400 to about 1200 during which all theoretical knowledge was allowed to lapse, superstitious practices crept in and, apart from the School of

Salerno, medicine surrounded by sacred associations deteriorated into a collection of formulæ. Then follows an account of Arabian medicine and the mediæval awakening, in which the universities, especially Bologna, where public dissections were first performed, played a prominent part. In the revival of learning which took place in the fifteenth century and involved anatomy, physiology, and internal medicine as well as other branches of science, an important place is assigned to the anatomist Vesalius, whose masterpiece, "The Fabric of the Human Body," is regarded by the author not only as the foundation of modern medicine as a science, but also as the first great achievement of science itself in modern times, ranking with the treatise of Copernicus on "The Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres," which was published in the same year, 1543. The influence exercised on medicine in the seventeenth century by natural philosophers who were not medical men, such as Galileo, Boyle, and Newton, is illustrated by the work of Sanctorius, whose experiments laid the foundation of the modern study of metabolism, the microscopical investigators Malpighi and Leeuwenhoek, and others.

The first half of the eighteenth century was mainly occupied by two great medical figures, Hermann Boerhaave, who is described as the greatest physician of modern times and the pioneer of medical instruction in Europe, and Albrecht von Haller, one of the most voluminous of scientific writers, who won special distinction as a physiologist.

The last chapter, which occupies nearly half the book, deals with the development of preventive medicine, in which Great Britain was the leader from the first—embryology, chemical and experimental physiology, cellular pathology, the germ origin of disease, anaesthesia, modern surgical advances, bacteriology, the study of immunity, the conquest of the tropics, treatment of insanity, revolution in nursing, and medical statistics.

In the epilogue Dr. Singer deplors the lack of literary expression characteristic of a large proportion of modern scientific writers, due to the increasing neglect of the humanities in the adolescent stage of mental development.

The book is well printed, lavishly illustrated, and provided with a full index, the value of which is enhanced by the dates being fixed to the names of all persons mentioned in the text. The many readers who derive profit and pleasure from the present work will be glad to learn from the preface that Dr. Singer is engaged in a history of the biological sciences treated on somewhat similar lines.