

College Notices

The Library

SOME RECENT ADDITIONS

CHRETIEN J: Tuberculosis - the illustrated history of a disease. Hauts-de-France, 1998; 159pp
As tuberculosis germinates again in today's popular consciousness, it is difficult to imagine how persistently it would have weighed upon the people's minds last century. Although this illustrated volume concentrates on western society in the nineteenth century, Chretien depicts the social and cultural effects of the disease throughout its long history. The work delineates the disease in art, music and literature, unveils contemporary social attitudes towards it, exhibits it in an institutional setting (the sanatorium), and demonstrates science's progress towards its cure. Photographs, art, and other reproductions all substantiate the text and portray just how pervasive tuberculosis was within all levels of society. Indeed, one of the interesting appendixes is a list of tuberculosis' famous victims that might be mistaken for a *Who's Who* of the nineteenth century. Chretien's depiction of the disease is a fascinating read and a timely warning against complacency.

COOPE J: Doctor Chekhov: A study in literature and medicine. Cross Publishing, 1997; 159pp
'These sick people will be the death of me' (Anton Chekhov). Chekhov is primarily regarded as one of the greatest modern writers and dramatists, but what is much less known about the artist is that he also practised medicine concurrently with his literary career and was profoundly concerned with the fate of the medical profession. It is therefore not surprising that medicine had a deep impact on Chekhov's work. Drawing upon Chekhov's medical teachers, friends, and colleagues, as well as his personal experiences (cholera epidemics, the Russian peasantry, and a voyage to a penal island), Coope describes the noted artist within a fascinating landscape. At one time Chekhov considered practising psychiatry, which is hardly surprising when one considers the elaborately-constructed literary characters he was sketching at the time. An intriguing chapter also contrasts Chekhov's medical views with another Russian literary giant of the time - Tolstoy. The book concludes with a chapter on tuberculosis, the disease that prematurely ended Chekhov's life at the age of 44.

TALLIS R, FILLIT HM, BROCKLEHURST JC: Geriatric medicine and gerontology (fifth edition). Churchill Livingstone, 1998; 1622pp
Now in its fifth edition, *Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology* has undergone a capacious revision with extensive additions reflecting the continual evolution and specialisation of geriatric medicine. Despite its enormous size, the text remains easy to navigate with the subject matter broken down into readily accessible units edited by leading international specialists. This book is a solid and is a definitive reference for the physician seeking an expansive revision or quick subject-specific update.

WARNER JHL: Against the spirit of system. Princeton, 1998; 459pp
Against The Spirit of the System describes a period of the nineteenth century when a great many American doctors studied medicine in Paris. These physicians studied at the radically empirical Paris Clinical School before returning to America determined to reform what they saw as a stagnant medical system. Drawing upon primary evidence - letters, student notes, and diaries - Warner describes the empirical spirit that drove these reformers to struggle 'against the spirit of the system' to enhance their profession. John Warner's book is a comprehensive and compelling look at the French empirical influence in the development of American medical culture.

BOOK FROM THE COLLECTION

Arnot, Hugo *The History of Edinburgh* Edinburgh, W Creech; 1779

Hugo Arnot's *History of Edinburgh*, first published in 1779, is one of the most important sources of information on the history of the city. It includes information on such everyday things as the price of potatoes as well as elegant descriptions of the city's institutions. The College's George Street Hall merits a detailed description which lists the number of windows in the library before describing the under-floor which contained lodgings for both the porter and the librarian. All Arnot's reports are written, it is said, with 'a vein of causticity highly characteristic of the author'.

Arnot was born in Leith in 1749, and became a member of the Faculty of Advocates in 1772. He was well known in Edinburgh, not only for his wit but also for his 'great height, but sadly deficient breadth'. This made him a favourite subject of the caricaturist John Kay who drew several portraits of him (Figure 1, see overleaf). Arnot was also extremely asthmatic and was said to have become prematurely old due to his ill health although, curiously enough, he described Edinburgh as 'the most healthful of any town of equal bulk in Britain'.

Arnot was not just concerned with the past, and he used his influence in local and legal matters to hold up the building of Edinburgh's South Bridge for at least ten years because, he said, the enormous expense was being met by taxing the poor. Some of his ideas would have drastically changed the map of Edinburgh, but show a great deal of foresight. He was against the building of the new university buildings on South Bridge because it would cause traffic problems. And he argued for refurbishing the long neglected Holyrood House as the new university.

Hugo Arnot's 'asthma' led to his death in 1786 aged only 37. He left eight young children. One of his daughters later married Peter Reid the editor of William Cullen's *First Lines of the Practice of Physic*. Arnot's grandson, David Boswell Reid, graduated MD at Edinburgh in 1830 and was made a Fellow of the College in 1831. Dr Reid became Professor of Chemistry at Edinburgh, and in 1856 was made government medical inspector to the sanitary commission of the United States.

On behalf of the College, the Editor would like to congratulate Dr Eric F. Dott, who will be 100 years old on 3 December 1998. Born in Colinton, Midlothian, Dr Dott trained and graduated MB ChB at the University of Edinburgh in 1925. Specialising in paediatrics and community child health, he worked in the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh, and became a Fellow of this College in 1933.

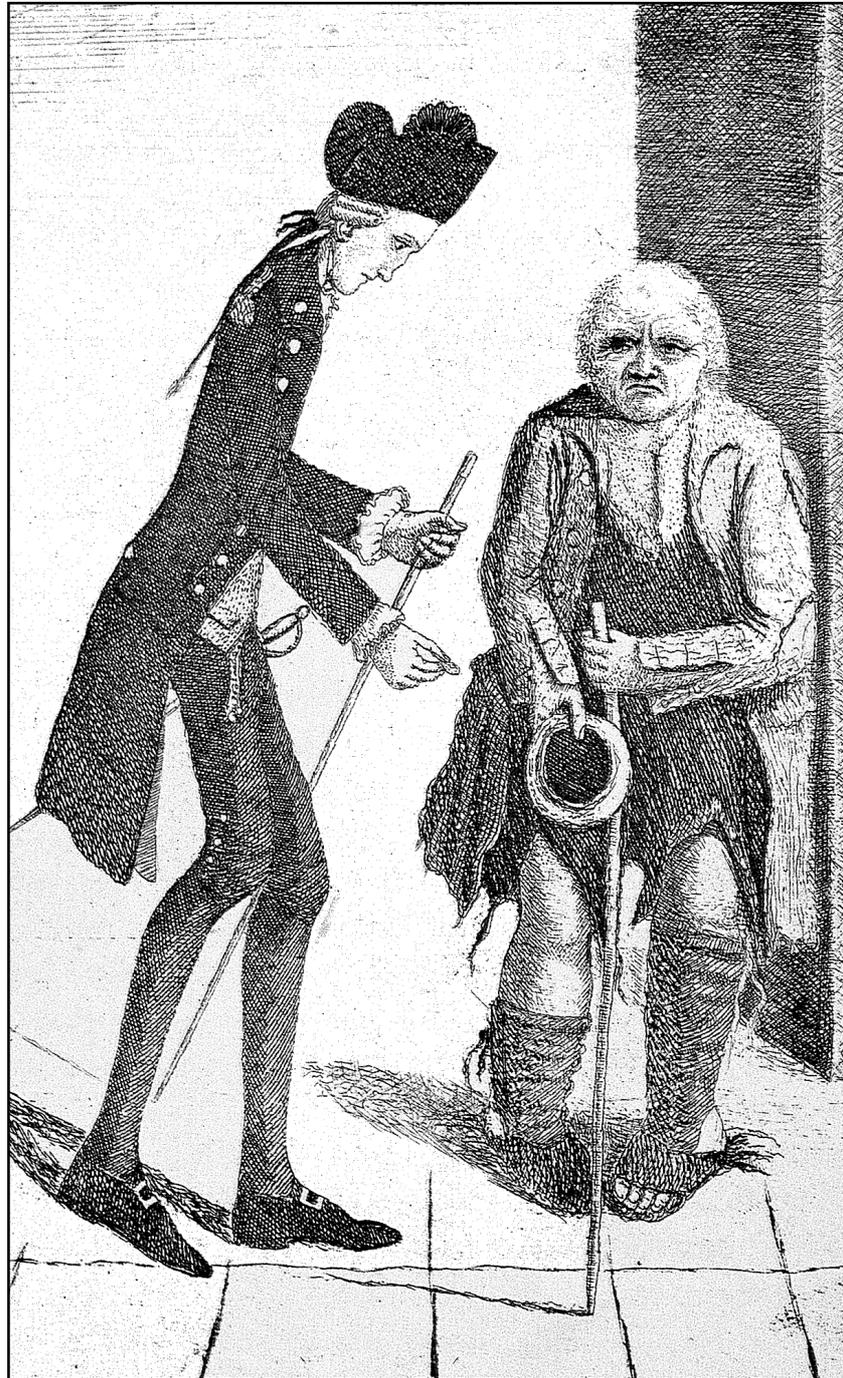


FIGURE 1
John Kay's depiction of Hugo Arnot relieving a beggar known as 'Gingerbread Jock'.