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*"To the solid ground
Of Nature trusts the mind which builds for aye."*—WORDSWORTH.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1919.

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PHYSICIAN.

Dr. John Fothergill and his Friends: Chapters in Eighteenth-century Life. By Dr. R. Hingston Fox. Pp. xxiv+434. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1919.) Price 21s. net.

MORE than any other period, the eighteenth century is rich in memoirs and biographical history, and from these sources have been obtained most of our facts regarding the mode of life, the characters, and the mental activities of those who were representative of that age. But estimates of the lives and work of physicians have not appeared so frequently, although many medical men in the eighteenth century influenced the social life of their period profoundly enough to merit a biographical memoir.

The life of Dr. John Fothergill is a case in point, and the book under review is a valuable contribution to the biographical history of medicine. Fothergill is fully worthy of the care Dr. Fox has bestowed upon his history, for, in a sense, he was representative of his age and profession. He occupied a respectable, if not a commanding, position in medicine; he was ever ready to promote with his purse and influence the claims of science, and in an age when few paid attention to public health and education he was an energetic and enlightened reformer. Others, notably Lettsom, have essayed the portrait of Fothergill, but we do not remember any memoir in which the character of the great Quaker physician is depicted with more accuracy and skill.

The life of Fothergill may be considered from the point of view of the physician, the man of science, and the philanthropist. In all he played a considerable part, but his precise position as a physician is difficult to describe. He was, it is true, very successful in private practice, and

enjoyed an unusually large share of public patronage. From accounts that have been handed down, he appears to have been a shrewd and accurate observer of the clinical phenomena of disease. But to judge from the scanty and hastily composed medical writings left by Fothergill, he does not appear to have been a sagacious scientific thinker, nor has he contributed much to the advance of medicine. He was content to cling to the traditions of the old clinician, and was uninfluenced by the advances that were being made in the study of morbid anatomy as an aid to the diagnosis and treatment of disease. As a physician he belongs to the class of which Richard Warren, Henry Revell Reynolds, and Sir Henry Hallford were leaders, but he cannot be assigned a place among the great men who advanced medicine, such as Matthew Baillie, William Prout, and Richard Bright.

Fothergill's position in science was not unlike that of Sir Joseph Banks, whose influence, more than actual scientific work performed, produced a salutary effect on British science in the eighteenth century. Botany interested him keenly, and nearly all the time he could snatch from his medical commitments was devoted to the cultivation of his famous garden of thirty acres at Upton Park, where fifteen gardeners were continually employed. Fothergill's estate at Upton Park was no mere pleasure garden devised for the purpose of social entertainment, but a nursery for the rearing of shrubs and plants brought from all parts of the world by collectors in Fothergill's pay. In this way he was responsible for the introduction of many varieties which can be seen in any garden at the present day.

Besides medicine and botany, Dr. Fox gives a full account of Fothergill's work in education and politics, and his position as a leader of the Society of Friends is dealt with in a temperate and able manner. The book is trustworthy, and should commend itself to those who are interested in the intellectual progress of the eighteenth century.

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