

than an argument that social history or the patient's history are important in themselves, the premise of many social histories of medicine available. Rather, one cannot understand the change to a scientific medicine, to stranger treating stranger, without understanding the social bankruptcy of older medical systems in early industrial America.

Few physicians were displaced by the seismic social and scientific change of the late nineteenth century. They clung to older therapies or practices while paying eloquent lip service to the new. Day-to-day medicine, Haller reveals, "moved at a snail's pace" (p. ix). In showing this, with abundant examples to hold the reader's attention, the book may surprise those who have been comfortable with stories of progress in medical science or content with anecdotes of the terrible trials for the patient of yesteryear. Since there are many specialized studies available elsewhere, the scholar may similarly despair at Haller's refusal to draw fine chronological boundaries, clear, challengeable historical theories and models, or sharply defined conclusions. But the rich image he recreates of American medicine is bound to captivate the general reader and stimulate interest in our common medical past.

Indiana University, Bloomington

Ann G. Carmichael

John W. Foster: Politics and Diplomacy in the Imperial Era, 1873-1917. By Michael J. Devine. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981. Pp. x, 187. Illustrations, notes, essay on sources, bibliography, index. \$15.50.)

This book is an ambitious undertaking, for in only 115 pages Michael J. Devine writes the biography of a "man viewed by his colleagues as America's 'first professional diplomat'" (p. 5) and assesses his "contributions to the development of American foreign policy during the era of imperialism" (p. 5). The thesis of the volume is that John W. Foster's diplomatic record "demonstrates clearly the continuity in the evolution of American foreign policy from Ulysses S. Grant to Woodrow Wilson" (p. 4), and the conclusion is that Foster's "unique contribution to American diplomacy was his transmission of nineteenth-century idealism, nationalism, and a sense of world mission to men . . . who were to form and implement foreign policy in the twentieth century" (p. 116).

The son of British immigrants who settled in Evansville, Foster was a reserved young man when he attended Indiana University at age fifteen. He graduated as valedictorian of his

class, studied law, and at age twenty-one started a private practice in Evansville. By this time his personality had set—he was abrupt, humorless, moralistic, opportunistic, and extremely partisan. After the Civil War his political fortunes rose with those of the Republican party, and he began a diplomatic career. He was rewarded with several ministerial assignments. Eventually, upon the resignation of Secretary of State James G. Blaine in 1892, Foster became himself secretary of state.

Perhaps it is the short length of the book that has proved troublesome for the author. Many assertions are not sufficiently explained. Devine's point about Foster's "midwestern origins" is, for example, ambiguous. He characterizes Foster as narrow, inexperienced, and unfamiliar with world affairs; yet he insists his practical and diverse midwestern background served him well. Just what was so midwestern about Foster's background is never made clear. The author believes that "as the decade of the nineties commenced, Foster was the American diplomat most experienced in the policies and tactics necessary for an expansionist foreign policy. . ." (p. 38). Admired by President Benjamin Harrison, Foster was brought into the administration. But Devine goes too far when he suggests that as Secretary of State Blaine's health declined, Harrison sought Foster's counsel with such increasing frequency that by the time of Blaine's resignation Foster was already acting as secretary of state. Another confusion occurs in regard to the Chilean crisis of 1891-1892, with the author's suggestion that "no incident more clearly demonstrated the magnitude of Foster's influence. . . . Foster was in large measure responsible for causing the crisis that developed. . ." (p. 44). But Foster did not divert Harrison from strict neutrality during the Chilean civil war; he did not "meddle" in the *Itata* affair; and his influence in the administration was indeed limited. Devine maintains that Foster's tenure as secretary of state proves he provided continuity in the Harrison administration. The nature of the continuity is not clear.

The book is marred by Devine's awkward prose, poor organization, citations filled with typographical errors, general carelessness (for example, he refers to the United States minister to Chile as Thomas Egan instead of Patrick Egan and to the Chilean rebel agent as Tumbull instead of Trumbull). Foster, unfortunately, burned most of his papers, and the present book is constructed from other, sometimes unreliable, sources. As such it probably was difficult to write with certainty about many of the diplomatic controversies that Foster touched. Still,

the present book's difficulties are such that some other scholar must again attempt the task.

*University of Vermont,
Burlington*

Joyce S. Goldberg

Long Steel Rail: The Railroad in American Folksong. By Norm Cohen. Music edited by David Cohen. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981. Pp. xx, 710. Illustrations, notes, references, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$49.95.)

This is an awesome book, an exhaustive study of folk songs dealing with life on or around railroads. Norm Cohen, executive director of the John Edwards Memorial Foundation at UCLA (a major center for the study of country music) and editor of its *Quarterly*, is also an industrial chemist. The book is difficult to describe because it is so detailed, so comprehensive, so full of anecdotes and information that one wonders if there is anything left to write on the topic. The three brief opening chapters provide a history of railroads in the United States, a history of written and recorded music, and an overview of railroad songs starting with one written in 1828.

The remainder of the book is divided into topical sections: Heroes and Badmen, The Fatal Run, Working on the Railroad, In a Boxcar around the World, and the like. Within each of the nine sections anywhere from three to fifteen songs are discussed. Included are such popular tunes as "John Henry," "Casey Jones," "The Wreck of the Old 97," "The Wabash Cannonball," and "The Rock Island Line," alongside such obscurities as "The Wreck of the C&O Sportsman" and "The Railroad Boomer." Each song is discussed at length, including alternate verses and versions, historical accuracy or inaccuracy, recorded history, and a list of all printed sources and recordings which could be located. It seems as if the author has read every song book and listened to every record ever produced. Some items have only a few references, while others have dozens and even hundreds; the listing of recordings of "John Henry" runs to eleven pages.

This is more than a discussion of some railroad songs. More broadly, it is a fascinating history of folk music, which Cohen defines as music "the survival of which does not depend entirely on commercial media. Thus a song need not be old in order to qualify, but it must outlive its vogue in sheet music and records" (p. 23). Such a general definition allows him to