Finally, B. Hall's essay 'Erasmus: Biblical Scholar and Reformer' deserves to stand beside Mrs. Phillips' and Mr. Thomson's essays as the three most scholarly and informative pieces in this volume. Mr. Hall's essay is designed to establish a framework for Erasmus's Biblical scholarship and for his aims as a reformer of the Church. The first part of the essay deals in some detail with a realistic and not uncritical appraisal of Erasmus's work on the New Testament. The second part is a concise and extremely articulate summary of the *philosophia Christi*, the real motivation for Erasmus's work on the Bible. This section is by far the best summary of Erasmianism I have seen since James K. McConica's study of the topic in *English Humanists and Reformation Politics* (Oxford, 1965).

As in nearly all collections of critical essays a certain amount of unevenness seems almost inevitably the price to be paid for flashes of brilliance and insight. This volume is no exception. Fortunately, however, at least three of the essays are such fine examples of research and scholarship that they almost force one to disregard the high cost of this volume.

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Stillman Drake and I. E. Drabkin (eds.), *Mechanics in Sixteenth-Century Italy. Selections from Tartaglia, Benedetti, Guido Ubaldo and Galileo*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969. Pp. xii, 428. \$12.50

Medieval science has come under close scrutiny in the present century, as a result of which a great wealth of material has been discovered, analyzed, and translated, with a view to the establishment of linkages between the scientific revolution and the works of the remote past. To a very large degree, the program that has been followed in the examination of medieval science was inaugurated by Pierre Duhem about the beginning of the present century. Duhem saw in the manuscripts of Leonardo da Vinci a point of convergence of medieval scientific thought and a point of its dissemination into new channels during the sixteenth century. His bold hypothesis, which served to organize history of science as a field of inquiry and stimulated scores of able and willing workers in the field, has in turn been called into question. Other trains of scientific thought, it is now believed, may be historically more important in the actual emergence of modern science than the lineage traced by Duhem and his followers. The transmission of old scientific ideas and the origination of new ones from the time of Leonardo to that of Galileo seems on the whole to have been conjectured rather than studied. In a proper study we need to learn more about the actual goals and methods of the men throughout Italy who wrote on mechanics from many quite different viewpoints. It is in order to assist others in the pursuit of this kind of study that the editors of this volume have provided us with excellent translations of important sixteenth century works. The Italian selections from Tartaglia and Guido Ubaldo have been rendered into English by Stillman Drake and the Latin texts of Benedetti and Galileo have been translated by I. E. Drabkin.

In his enlightening introductory essay, Stillman Drake distinguishes in the interweaving strands of late Renaissance science four ancient and two medieval traditions. This classification may give a greater appearance of order and coherence than is actually the case but it greatly facilitates an initial discussion of sixteenth-century writers. First, in chronological order, was an Aristotelian tradition represented by the *Questions on Mechanics*. Second in point of time was the Archimedean tradition which differed from the Aristotelian

in its emphasis on static rather than dynamic problems and on rigorously mathematical demonstration rather than qualitative reasoning. The third comprised the Alexandrian works bearing on theoretical mechanics and was associated with the name of Hero. The fourth, the technological tradition, embraced Alexandrian works on practical mechanics and treatises such as those of Vitruvius on architecture. The two medieval traditions were the eclectic body of works, usually referred to as the medieval science of weights, dealing principally with problems of equilibrium, and the large number of commentaries on 'The Physics of Aristotle.' Professor Drake discusses the chronological order of appearance of these ancient and medieval traditions in the sixteenth century, and he draws attention to the different interpretations given in the northern and in the central Italian schools.

The usefulness of this book is enhanced by a good index and an extensive bibliography compiled by Miriam Drabkin. As an introduction to the history of the physical sciences in the sixteenth century, it cannot be too highly commended.

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Jean Plattard. *The Life of François Rabelais*. Trans. Louis P. Roche. New York: Humanities Press, 1968. Pp. xi, 308. \$10

Since its appearance more than forty years ago, this biography of Rabelais by one of France's foremost Renaissance scholars has been considered authoritative. There seems little reason today for modifying this judgment. The problem facing any biographer of Rabelais is the dearth of primary source material concerning his life. The few letters of Rabelais which have been preserved reveal him at his most formal, paying homage to Erasmus or discussing Roman politics. Consequently, we are left without any real sense of the man's personality; and it is perhaps inevitable that *any* biography of the author of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* can do no more than send us back to explore these works themselves, whose rich ambiguities can only be hinted at.

Plattard, therefore, chose a factual, descriptive presentation. The treatment of the historical background is adequate but terse – one would be grateful for longer digressions on some of Rabelais' fascinating contemporaries. Rabelais himself emerges as a reasonably straightforward humanist, maintaining fairly easy relations with his liberal but orthodox protectors, Geoffroy d'Estissac and Guillaume Du Bellay. The problem of Rabelais' religious convictions has become less burning with the years; but Plattard, influenced by Gilson, anticipated the now widely accepted views of Lucien Febvre, V. L. Saulnier and M. A. Screech on this subject. His Rabelais is a practical man, sympathetic to Evangelism in the beginning because it 'satisfied fully his need of complete liberty of religious thought.' Later, when the Evangelist position became politically untenable, Plattard sees Rabelais as having 'very good reason to feel more at ease in the traditional Church,' given the unattractiveness of the Calvinist alternative. This rather undramatic view still seems the most reasonable.

Although Louis Roche's translation (published shortly after the original) is a very faithful one, it is often stiff and lifeless, lacking even the academic elegance of Plattard's prose. However, this reissue makes a reliable and scholarly biography of Rabelais again available to English speakers.

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