Scalpel in a Saddlebag, the Story of a Physician in Indian Territory: Virgil Berry, M. D

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Originally published in 1959, this new paperback edition of 163 of Catlin's paintings of Indian life depicts scenes and portraits from his lesser known paintings made between 1852 and 1855 while traveling along the Pacific coast and in South America. The paintings are accompanied by notes and descriptions from Catlin's own Smithsonian exhibition catalog of 1871. Although only twelve of the paintings are reproduced in color, the book is well worth the price and the publisher is to be commended for reissuing it in paperback.


Based on the memoirs of Virgil Berry, this short biography details his career as a doctor on the frontier. He had strong interests in surgery and public health and trained in a proprietary medical school in Chicago. He practiced among the Indians most of his life and was National Physician to the Seminoles from 1898 to 1901. He later settled in Okmulgee (OK) where he served as a general practitioner until his death in 1954. Those interested in the history of medicine on the frontier will find much to please them in this book and the general reader will also appreciate Berry's career.

—MDG