

Book Reviews

Weale (London) is not the first to be fascinated by Leonardo da Vinci's notes and drawings concerning the eye, the brain, and vision; but as he totally neglects earlier theories and observations (and historical work as relevant as David C. Lindberg's), he is unable to give any valid historical assessment. Strangely enough, he attributes the first correct description of the inverted retinal image to Bishop Berkeley (1708/09), blandly ignoring Johannes Kepler (1604).

Albert (Boston) and Blodi (Iowa City) describe carefully the life and work of Georg Joseph Beer (1762–1821) of Vienna, the first professor of ophthalmology at any university. Their critical evaluation of Beer's teachings is perhaps somewhat too strongly influenced by the modern ophthalmologist's "knowing it better". Erroneously, they attribute the invention of iridectomy—the surgical formation of a new pupil when the natural one is obstructed—to Beer instead of William Cheselden. Jaeger (Heidelberg) draws a concise picture of his compatriot Theodor Leber (1840–1917) as a founder of experimental ophthalmology. Leber was essentially a biologist; the eye just served him as an extremely useful object for biological research—as it had already done for Virchow and others.

Some valuable papers come from the Netherlands. Van Nouhuys (Nijmegen) discusses the lacrimal surgery of Peter Camper, while the contributions of Donders's most influential Utrecht school to the development of ophthalmoscopy and tonometry are described by den Tonkelaar, Henkes, and van Leersum (Utrecht and Rotterdam).

The book is excellently printed and more than generously illustrated. Unfortunately, the price is rather prohibitive. Otherwise, the book will, despite its shortcomings, prove useful to medical historians interested in the fine science of ophthalmology.

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DANIEL M. FOX, MARCIA MELDRUM, and IRA REZAK (eds), *Nobel Laureates in Medicine or Physiology: a biographical dictionary*, New York, Garland, 1990, 8vo, pp. xviii, 595, \$95.00.

The editors of this biographical dictionary suggest that the life stories of Nobel Laureates can be "read as a modern history of medicine". Certainly the announcement each year of the names of the winners of science's most glittering prizes is newsworthy. Critics may argue that the prizes are actually divisive within the scientific community and that the selections emphasize abstract and highly technical medical science at the expense of more important achievements, such as the eradication of smallpox or oral rehydration therapy of cholera. Nevertheless, the very fact that Nobel Prizes have become so important mean that a reference volume such as this has its uses, especially for more recent winners who are still alive or died too recently to be included in more authoritative works such as *The Dictionary of Scientific Biography*.

All Nobel Laureates for medicine of physiology between 1901 and 1989 are included. Individual biographies follow a standard format and in about four pages summarize the life and career and analyze the scientific achievements for which the award was made. Selected bibliographies refer the reader to a few primary sources and other biographical accounts. The standard of accuracy is reasonable, although a number of the American contributors have trouble with nuances of British life: the Oxford D.Phil. occasionally becomes a Ph.D., too many people are described as being elected to "membership" in the Royal Society, the entry on Sir James Black confuses King's College London with University College London, and one of the contributors, Frederic Holmes, has his name misspelt in the master list. A subject index would have increased the volume's usefulness, while the name index has all the appearance of a computer-generated one: thus, Sir William Bayliss is confused with his son Leonard, and J. J. R. MacLeod, mis-cited as F. F. R. McLeod in the entry on E. A. Doisy, gets duly indexed twice. Unfortunately, neither version in the index is correct.

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