

Book Reviews

GEORGE M. BAER (editor), *The natural history of rabies*, 2 vols., New York and London, Academic Press, 1975, 8vo, vol. 1: pp. xvi, 454, illus., £31.60; vol. 2: pp. xvi, 387, illus., £27.35.

Rabies has become an increasingly important disease in the last few years, although it remains quite rare. These volumes, comprising forty-two chapters, deal with all types and all aspects of the disease. They are, except for the first, concerned with the biology and pathology of rabies and the animals that carry it, and with its control, prevention, and treatment. Each is a detailed and authoritative account, often lavishly illustrated and always fully documented. Together they provide an up-to-date, definitive work. As is the case with many treatises of multiple authorship, there is a lack of cohesion and the editor has made no attempt to summarize modern concepts and principles in either an introduction or an epilogue. Nevertheless, the work will have wide appeal and will maintain its status as a comprehensive reference work for some time to come.

Most of the authors give a brief account of the history of their special area of study, but this is usually quite brief and more a review of the literature than history *per se*. This is also true of the first chapter in Volume 1, 'History of rabies'. It seems a pity that a professional historian with experience of the history of virology was not enlisted to write this chapter. After all, it seems unlikely that the other contributors to the book are amateurs, for, as the publishers say, each is ". . . an authority in the field. . ."

V. B. WIGGLESWORTH, *Insects and the life of man. Collected essays on pure science and applied biology*, London, Chapman & Hall, 1976, 8vo, pp. vi, 217, illus., £3.25 (paperback).

Sir Vincent Wigglesworth's distinguished career in insect physiology has spanned fifty years, and sixteen of his more general papers, essays, addresses, and surveys, (1935–1971), intended for non-specialist audiences, have now been collected here together with his brief introduction. Several concern insect pests, agriculture, malaria, his own work on *Rhodnius*, the vector of Chagas' disease, and the epidermal cell. Many contain historical information and others deal with historical topics: Sir John Lubbock's contribution to insect physiology; fifty years of this discipline; Wordsworth and science; religion and science.

Together these pieces provide an attractive collection on a variety of subjects by a leading entomologist. It is a pity, however, that the essays have not been more fully edited in order to bring them up to date, although a certain amount of updating has been carried out. This would have increased their value greatly, although as period-pieces a few stand on their own merits.

GEORGE M. KREN and LEON H. RAPPOPORT (editors), *The varieties of psycho-history*, New York, Springer, 1976, 8vo, pp. [xii], 370, \$15.95 (\$8.50 paperback).

There are seventeen essays in this anthology devoted to the nature of psycho-history, psychobiography, the history of childhood, and to group processes and historical trends. They characterize the outpourings of a group of articulate psychologists, psycho-analysts, and historians who claim to have produced a new dimension in history by linking it with psychology. They work in three categories, life, family,

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and group history, and ally themselves closely to Freud, believing that psychohistory is the fulfilment of his dream of solving the great cultural and historical riddles of mankind by his method. However, until psychoanalysis itself has been adequately evaluated, there can be no legitimate applied psycho-analysis.

The psychohistorians make voluble claims for their new approach, but its impact on the history of medicine has so far been very slight. If it is such a remarkably rewarding technique, why does it form no part of academic medical history, and in Britain, for example, is almost totally ignored?

PETER N. STEARNS, *Old age in European society. The case of France*, London, Croom Helm, 1977, 8vo, pp. 163, £6.95.

It is claimed here that denigration not veneration of the elderly is the commoner attitude. The author's aim is to provide a historical perspective on ageing in order to promote a better understanding of the present-day problems it creates, and to provide a more positive approach to it. He does this by presenting a number of thematic essays which explore topics such as, 'Old age in French working-class culture', 'Geriatric medicine', 'Where the elderly lived and live', and 'Towards a new style of life'. France is chosen because, together with Sweden, it earliest had the highest proportion of aged, and because it developed an attitude to the elderly before the modern phenomenon of ageing. The work is liberally documented, but the text can be fully comprehended without the end-notes. Most of the material deals with the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but this is a useful contribution to a subject that is being greatly neglected by historians. Considerable attention is currently focused on the history of the child, the family, and the female, but the elderly should be the next to be rehabilitated historically.

GORDON WOLSTENHOLME and JOHN F. KERSLAKE, *The Royal College of Physicians of London. Portraits II*, Amsterdam, Oxford, and New York, Excerpta Medica, 1977, 4to, pp. viii, 239, illus., \$24.00, Dfl.50.00.

In 1964 Sir Gordon Wolstenholme produced an elegant catalogue of portraits in the Royal College of Physicians of London, and he now presents a supplement containing descriptions of sixty portraits either acquired or found since then.

There is an essay by Rudolf E. O. Ekkart on 'Collections of portraits in Western Europe', and David Piper's Lloyd-Roberts Lecture of 1974, 'Take the face of a physician' is reproduced. Following these, the portraits are described by Mr. Kerslake with biographical notes on the sitter by Sir Gordon. The media represented include oil paintings, miniatures, sculptures, watercolours, drawings, and medals.

The subjects of the portraits are mainly the Presidents of the College, but there are a number which depict individuals who have little or no connexion with it. Like the earlier volume, this book is beautifully produced and it represents a useful addition to the iconography of the medical profession.

The Journal of Physiology, December 1976, 263: 1-71, 1P-229P, £6.00.

The Physiological Society was founded in 1876 and this is its *Journal's* centenary issue. Professor Sir Alan Hodgkin presents a paper 'Chance and design in electro-