

Book Reviews

Billroth, Anton Wölfler and Ernest Miles. Gibbon's mechanical heart and lung apparatus in cardiac surgery and J. P. Merrill's homotransplantation of the human kidney between identical twins are the 'Milestones on the horizon'. It is noted that two-thirds of the contributions are American. There is an index of eight pages.

W. R. BETT

Amid Masters of Twentieth-Century Medicine. LEONARD G. ROWNTREE. Springfield, Ill.: C. C. Thomas; Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1958; pp. 684. 87s. 6d. Most people would agree that an illustrated history book is much more valuable than one consisting only of text.

In all my poor historical investigation [wrote Thomas Carlyle], it has been, and always is, one of the most primary wants to procure a bodily likeness of the personage inquired after; a good portrait if such exists; failing that, even an indifferent if sincere one.

Dr. L. G. Rowntree who has practised for fifty years as research worker, teacher, clinician and medical administrator, sets out to attempt the laudable task of presenting a panorama of twentieth-century medicine in the light of his own wide experience and illustrated by portraits of many of those contributing to the scene. He naturally deals mainly with American medicine and amongst many other topics considers in detail the origins and development of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, the Mayo Clinic and the Rockefeller Institute. The result is a chatty conglomeration of personal reminiscences intermingled with mainly anecdotal biographical references to individuals encountered during his professional life and travels. It seems that every medical practitioner the writer has ever met is included, but despite the title of the book, only a small percentage qualify for the epithet of 'master'. His accounts are at times alarmingly frank although there is little that his subjects could take exception to and his approach is usually a charitable one. He also adds accounts of selected persons who have been outstanding in the progress of medicine in the present century, but whom he has not met, and some, like Einstein, whose influence on medicine is less obvious. The book is mainly a revealing and well illustrated presentation of American medicine but if it is like Carlyle's alternative demands concerning portraits, it is at least sincere, and the personal information concerning individuals is interesting and often new.

As such it is a readable description of fifty years of medicine as well as an interesting account of an American physician's experience and contacts, but it cannot be recommended to those who are seriously interested in the evolution of modern medicine. In the first place it is full of inaccuracies, a defect perhaps of less importance when the author is describing his holiday activities; he tells us for example that he visited 'the Lorna Doone country' whilst in the Lowlands of Scotland, and saw Stirling Castle near Carlisle. But when mis-statements concerning other men are recorded, this is a more serious matter. How can we trust the accuracy of a writer when we read that Sir Henry Head's contributions to medicine won for him 'the Noxen medal from the Royal College of Medicine, his M.R.C.S. and six years later his F.R.C.S.'? The literary style is indeed 'factual and understood by all' as the introducer tells us, but it would be more accurate to say that it is replete with the vernacular. Concerning progress in cardiology, we are told 'the opening guns of the heart campaign were fired by Sir James Mackenzie'. Furthermore the number of textual errors is considerable.

Although it is admittedly difficult to assess one's contemporaries adequately, all

would agree with Dr. Rowntree that there are 'giants with us in these times'. It is unlikely, however, that we would be willing to accept the conclusion that thirty-two of the selected thirty-eight are American citizens. Nor are we likely to be interested in a detailed account of his own personal ailments, together with those of his wife. However, Dr. Rowntree's conclusions drawn from a full and active medical life, if somewhat trite, abound in common sense. In an Apologia are listed a further ninety-four important medical men of this century, only a dozen of whom live outside North America. The author promises us a further work embodying this material.

As is usual with this publisher, the present book is beautifully produced. It gives a useful picture of American medicine, and despite a somewhat biased and uncritical selection, it is an excellent picture album of twentieth-century medical men. In respect of the latter, it would have earned Caryle's praise.

EDWIN CLARKE

Young Endeavour: Contributions to Science by Medical Students of the Past Four Centuries.

WILLIAM CARLTON GIBSON. Springfield, Ill.: C. C. Thomas; Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1958; pp. 292. 50s.

Longfellow's immortal lines are undoubtedly true for it is certain that contemplation of the lives of great men acts as a stimulus to striving students; the testimony of the great men themselves concerning its influence proves that it is a potent force. The student, however, views his hero's Olympian stature with awe and may be overcome by humility on account of his own intellect and relative position. He thinks more usually of contributions to knowledge made during the prime of life by an established and experienced worker surrounded by pupils and junior helpers. But if he finds out that this man when but a student himself was able to contribute significantly either to his chosen field of interest or to some other, this is more within his ken. The effect upon the appropriate person may thus be greater and more fruitful.

Dr. W. C. Gibson, realizing the importance of this transference, has collected as many examples as he has been able to find, of outstanding medical practitioners who, during their undergraduate years, were able to carry out notable research. There are some sixty-six of them and they range from Fernel and Vesalius to Gowland Hopkins and Sherrington; they are grouped according to the subjects to which they contributed. A biographical sketch is given with emphasis upon the nature of the student contribution and the author writes well, except for occasional excesses such as the use of the phrase 'tortured verbal emesis' to describe modern medical terminology. There are adequate and well-chosen illustrations but a reference to them in the text would have been helpful.

The author admits that his collection is probably only a selection of all the persons who have assisted medical progress during their student days. And he has, of course, included only those who in their later life were outstanding personages. There are probably others who sank into oblivion after a meteoric start to their career. In addition, there are others whose contributions were made in conjunction with their elders and whose part in the research has either never been recorded or inadequately so. Thus William Squire whilst still a medical student at University College Hospital, played a prominent part in the introduction of ether anaesthesia to this country in 1846. Yet his uncle, the more famous Peter Squire is often accorded, incorrectly, the credit of being present on that famous Monday afternoon when Robert Liston employed 'this Yankee dodge' for the first time in Britain.

William Squire was one of a research team, a state of affairs which occurs more