

Book Reviews

The Story of X-Rays from Roentgen to Isotopes, edited by ALAN RALPH BLEICH, New York, Dover Publications, pp. 186, illus., \$1.35.

Roentgen gave his great discovery of X-rays to the whole world, but it was so quickly developed by medical science that the average reader tends to forget other applications of the rays.

This book is a timely reminder of the many fields into which the use of X-rays has extended. Some of them are less known than others. For example, medical readers do not usually think of radiography as one of the fine arts. Yet after reading Chapter 14 with its X-ray of a flower and another of a nautilus, one may be inclined to agree with the author that 'An entirely new type of radiography may be in the making'.

Another fascinating chapter deals with the use of X-rays in the detection of forged paintings and studying the technique of, and alterations to, the works of old masters; also its contribution to the controversial subject of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. The medical history of X-rays has its place, but the field covered is such a large one, and the book is so well balanced, that it is not possible for the author to go into any part of his subject in great detail. I have been told by those who remember it, that when Roentgen made his discovery there was a 'flutter' in the Victorian drawing-rooms. It would be possible to see through the walls into people's houses; there would be no privacy!

Roentgen made his discovery in 1895. In the following year Barry Blacker (not one of the British pioneers you will find mentioned in this book) in writing about distorted shadows stated 'The mind of the patient is also much disturbed, and it *may* be the confidence in her medical adviser considerably shaken should she by any chance obtain a glimpse of one of these distorted skiagrams.'

The reception of the discovery by the general public is well covered by Dr. Bleich.

Finally, Moodie's well known work on paleopathology is reviewed, and his contribution to medical history evaluated.

Altogether, this work is good value for money, and because of its wide range, there is likely to be some aspect of the subject that every reader will find new and interesting.

F. A. TUBBS

Pathology, by E. B. KRUMBHAAR, *Clio Medica* No. 19, New York and London, Hafner Publ. Co., 1962, pp. 206, 18 illus., 18s. 6d.

There might be two ways of writing a history of pathology, one recording the development of ideas, the other tabulating information about people who have made discoveries, advanced knowledge by their teaching or writing, or in some other way achieved pre-eminence in their own day and generation. The former method (tracing the development of ideas) would be more difficult to write but would certainly be more interesting to read. The second method would be likely to provide the better source of reference.

Professor E. B. Krumbhaar, the author of the recent *Clio Medica* entitled *Pathology*, has definitely chosen the second alternative though perhaps unconsciously. His brief though accurate and well-documented book tends to string itself out, stretching from one 'great man' to another, but telling us little of the current opinions of less enlightened contemporaries. Being well indexed and accompanied by a long chronological list of 'pathologic milestones' this book certainly provides a quick source of reference to answer the questions 'who did what, and when'? But how much more interesting if there had been a little more about 'Why'!

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