

Book Reviews

commonly today. Whereas previously research was such that an individual might make noteworthy progress by employing only his own intellect and his special senses, nowadays technical medical research demands the endeavours of a group of workers, often using complex apparatus. That the appropriate student should be included in the team and so benefit from the discipline is accepted by most, although some would say that the medical student of today is already too fully occupied and that the person who is so inclined can start his research after qualification. There will always be, of course, the chance of making a student contribution single-handed and perhaps by the use of only the innate talents. The young man should not, however, be disappointed if he does not emulate those included in Dr. Gibson's book. Reading this book and thus knowing what has been possible will certainly help, and as Sir Henry Dale in his charming foreword remarks, adequate recompense is likely to be obtained from expecting success in research as well as from its achievement. The contact with those devoted to this discipline can alone be an important factor in moulding a young man's approach to medical problems, and the salutary lesson of failure is no less important.

Despite the value of being aware of successful student investigators, the question whether it was justifiable to devote a whole book to this topic springs readily to mind. If we are to encourage medical students to read about their worthy predecessors, it is important that they should be given a balanced view of people, ideas and periods. By its very nature Dr. Gibson's book fails in this task and it would seem that before tackling his biographies, which have all been produced elsewhere time and time again, or perhaps in conjunction with it, some instruction or additional reading is also necessary so that the student or junior practitioner may fit his heroes into the background of medical ideas and progress.

This book is well produced and there is a minimum of textual errors. Together with wider reading in medical history, it should form part of the medical student's self-education which Michael Faraday, one of the book's most illustrious representatives, advocated so passionately. Unfortunately, its price may keep it out of the personal collections of the very persons for whom it is intended.

EDWIN CLARKE

Tissot und sein Traité des Nerfs. H. W. BUCHER. Zürich: Juris-Verlag, 1958, pp. 62. The eighteenth century abounded in sparkling medical geniuses. The physician, Samuel A. A. D. Tissot (1728–97), although claimed as one by his contemporaries, has since received scant mention from those outside his native Switzerland. Popular with professional colleagues, students and laymen alike, he spent almost his whole professional life in Lausanne, despite tempting offers made by the Kings of Poland and of England, which in themselves illustrate his fame. He was elected to several learned scientific bodies, including the Royal Society, and the great Haller styled him *celeberrimus clinicus*. It was even said that he was a greater attraction to visitors than Voltaire, when the great Frenchman was living at Geneva and later at Fernier.

Tissot's best known achievement was a book on popular medicine and hygiene (*Avis au Peuple sur la Santé*, 1760) which ran into ten editions in less than six years and was translated into every European language; it included an attack on quackery which was particularly praiseworthy and timely. His writings on small-pox inoculation and on masturbation likewise brought him fame and popularity, but his other works, of which there are several, are less well known. Of the latter, the *Traité des Nerfs* (1778) calls for special mention.

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The present excellent monograph comes from Professor E. H. Ackerknecht's Department of Medical History at Zürich and, although dealing specifically with this last-mentioned book and its author, it contains in addition information concerning the history of neurology up to the time of Tissot. A biographical sketch is followed by a consideration in turn of each part of the *Traité*. The author's descriptions and beliefs are discussed in the light of preceding and contemporary knowledge of the structure and function of the nervous system and of its diseases. The salient features of Tissot's contribution to neurology are then succinctly summarized. Finally there is a list of the contents of the *Traité* which included sections dealing with the anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, apoplexy, paralysis, epilepsy, catalepsy, migraine and insanity and a bibliography of its author. There are neither illustrations nor index.

On the whole, little has been written on Tissot's contributions to neurology and psychiatry. He upheld the views of his famous contemporary Albert von Haller who had elaborated and refined Glisson's concept of 'irritability', showing by experiments that all anatomical structures containing nervous tissue and muscle fibres are at once sensible and irritable. Daremberg considered this as Tissot's greatest merit. He also discovered and demonstrated the insensibility of tendons, and in his concept of epilepsy, he was in advance of his contemporaries. Furthermore, when dealing with the epileptic fit he reveals the sympathetic, compassionate approach so fundamental in those who are outstanding in clinical medicine. Dealing with the treatment of neurological disorders, he had, like his fellow clinicians and many since them, little original to contribute. Regarding his observations in psychology and psychiatry, it has been claimed that he anticipated some of Freud's basic notions by one hundred years. Certainly in the *Traité* he evolves a concept of the unconscious and the sub-conscious in rudimentary form, as well as hinting at the theory of suppression and dealing at length with various aspects of psychopathology.

Dr. Bucher's monograph can be recommended as the best available publication on a famous but little-known clinician and in particular on his neurological and psychiatric teachings. Furthermore, inasmuch as these are placed in their historical perspective, it can be considered a useful addition to the history of neuropsychiatry.

EDWIN CLARKE

Das Leben des Biologen Johannes Müller, 1801-58. GOTTFRIED KOLLER. Stuttgart:

Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft M.B.H., 1958; pp. 268. Illustrated. Dm. 16.80. Johannes Müller (1801-58) was undoubtedly the greatest biologist that Germany has produced. He had from childhood a passion for study, took a medical degree at Bonn and in 1826 became professor of anatomy there at the age of twenty-five. In the same year he issued his first major work *On the comparative physiology of the sense of sight*. In 1831 he saw the sea for the first time. This is noteworthy as most of his best work was on marine organisms. In the same year he spent two months with the anatomist, Jakob Henle, at Paris where he met Cuvier and Alexander von Humboldt and had demonstrated to him the different functions of anterior and posterior spinal nerve roots as previously displayed by Magendie and Charles Bell. In 1833 he was called to Berlin as professor of anatomy and physiology. This inaugurated a period of unparalleled intellectual activity. In that year, 1833, he issued the first volume of his *Handbook of Physiology*, the pioneer of modern physiology, and began editing his famous *Archiv für Anatomie und Physiologie*. Müller now had only twenty-five years to live. They were crowded with research of the most varied type, the results of which dominated the biology of German-speaking peoples in the second half of the nine-