

Book Reviews

gave a good but brief account, but says little of his subject's antecedents. James was the second son of the twelve children of William and Joan Douglas of Baads in West Calder, twelve miles distant from Edinburgh. They were a talented family, four of the sons being elected Fellows of the Royal Society, and three of these—James, John and George—qualifying in medicine.

James Douglas was born in 1675. He may have received his medical education at Edinburgh University, but he took the degree of M.D. of Rheims in 1699. He settled in London and soon won high repute as an anatomist and obstetrician. He was elected F.R.S. in 1706 and an Honorary F.R.C.P. in 1721. A cultured physician, being a good botanist and zoologist, a philologist and an authority on Horace, his literary tastes made him acquainted with authors and poets, and Pope mentions him favourably in the *Dunciad*. Equally, Cheselden, Mead, William Cowper and Sir Hans Sloane spoke highly of Douglas's professional attainments. In 1727 Douglas, with Sir Richard Manningham, was asked to investigate the imposture of Mary Toft, 'the rabbit-breeding woman'. How they unmasked the fraud is related in Chapter 6. Douglas attended members of the Royal family, and George II granted him a pension of £500 in 1735 for attendance on his daughter, the Princess of Orange.

Douglas advocated supra-pubic lithotomy and described the operation in 1726. In 1730 he published his most important work: *A Description of the Peritonaeum*. This includes an account of the structure, 'the pouch of Douglas', which has brought him eponymous fame. He was, also, a great teacher and contributed many papers on anatomy and physiology to the Royal Society. Dr. Thomas gives a full bibliography of his publications. Douglas died in 1742.

William Hunter was Douglas's resident pupil for a few months. At his master's death he was given his unpublished manuscripts and drawings now preserved in the Hunterian Collection in the University of Glasgow. Dr. Thomas has carefully studied this collection of papers and has made an annotated catalogue of it which is included in this excellent biography.

A. S. MAGNALTY

A History of Electrocardiography, by GEORGE E. BURCH and NICHOLAS P. DE-PASQUALE, Chicago, Year Book Medical Publishers, 1964, pp. 309, illus., 75s.

The stimulus to the production of this history of electrocardiography was the centenary in 1960 of the birth of Einthoven. It might also be seen as a review of the first fifty years of electrocardiography, for it was about 1910 that the new instrument came into clinical use. The history also coincides, therefore, with the life-spans of many cardiologists who are still living, and personal memory will add zest to their interest in the stories here told.

The book is divided according to different aspects of the subject; commencing with a brief general review of the story of electrocardiography it proceeds to a series of short biographies of the 'great men' of its past. It then passes on to the various 'periods' of development and application of the technique, ending with vector-cardiography. This account is supplemented by a chronological summary of main events, and a full chronologically arranged bibliography.

The introduction of letters from those responsible for new techniques, such as that from Dr. F. Wood describing his part in discovering the value of chest leads, is a happy touch. And such sorry tales of confusion as that caused by the appearances of left and right bundle branch block carry a lesson beautifully demonstrated in the

telling; a lesson relevant to the application of all technical procedures involving physics to clinical medicine.

In their introduction the authors evaluate the history and present-day status of electrocardiography; and this, apart from their unduly optimistic opinion that 'fortunately truth finally prevails and the best ideas supervene', they do with sage wisdom. They emphasize both the advantages and limitations of the technique in clinical medicine. They point out that the 'application of instrumental and physical specifications for electrocardiography have been over-extended, and some have been grossly erroneous'. This warning against the spuriously 'scientific' application of the basic sciences to clinical medicine has been necessary for the last three centuries, which hold innumerable examples of erroneous medical practice founded thereon. By their confinement to oblivion few, ignorant of the history of medicine, know of them, or their danger in our own time. This warning is perhaps particularly appropriate to our own generation, tempted as we are to clothe all our clinical observations in physico-mathematical dress.

It may surprise many outside the field of cardiology to be told that 'attempts to reduce any problem in electrocardiography to fundamental bioelectric phenomena . . . are at present entirely empirical'. From this it follows that interpretation of an E.C.G. is also empirical; that it is an art not a science, as is the interpretation of many clinical signs. In this lies the danger of the use of the instrument by inexperienced persons.

From the point of view of medical history this book focuses perhaps too closely on its particular technique. Thus, for example, by its omissions it gives the impression that cardiac arrhythmias were quite unknown before the use of the electrocardiograph. For some arrhythmias this is indeed true. But just as the authors give Galvani and his successors praise for their recognition of animal electricity, so Harvey deserves mention for his experimental observations of all degrees of heart block; and others, Vesalius and Morgagni for example, for their descriptions of such cases, clinically recognizable in retrospect today.

The candid and simple way in which the story of electrocardiography is told in this book will make it a source of real pleasure to cardiologists and senior physicians, and it provides a fine introduction to the subject for young doctors, medical students and electrocardiographers.

K. D. KEELE

Lebensbilderbuch eines Nervenarztes, by I. H. SCHULTZ, Stuttgart, Thieme, 1964, pp. xii, 166, DM 25.

Paradoxically, medical autobiography is rarely the stuff of history, even where the subject has given something great to the world. Professor Schultz, now an octogenarian, is well known on the Continent for his revival of hypnosis and self-hypnosis ('autogenic training') and many popular psychological books and articles. He weaves into his account in chatty vein his contacts with the great and not so great, and sketches of cases.

Most of his life as a successful psychotherapeutic practitioner was spent in Berlin and linked with the German Society for Psychotherapy, the presidency of which Kretschmer resigned in 1933 when Jung stepped into the breach to be followed later by a *Reichsführer für Psychotherapie*—Goering's doctor-brother. To all these changes the author adjusted successfully.

RICHARD HUNTER