

Book Reviews

The book closes with a discussion of Harvey's letters to Riolan and others, and of his *De Generatione Animalium*.

This essay is the product of a life-time's study. It is brimful of informative detail and comment. Enthusiasm for his subject, however, has led to a rather disjointed mode of presentation, which tends to obscure the main outline of the figure portrayed. There is also a tendency to an exuberance of Latin quotations which are not always relevant to the main theme. The skilful choice of illustrations and the full references reflect something of the richness of erudition from which this work on Harvey has sprung.

This is a book which will be fully appreciated by those who have already met Harvey and know something of him, rather than by those who wish to be introduced to him for the first time.

K. D. KEELE

Famous Faces in Diabetes. CECIL STRIKER. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1961; pp. 256. This is an entirely novel and original contribution to the literature on diabetes. It provides the reader with a 'visual acquaintance' of the men who have made major contributions in this field. In addition to the portraits, of which there are nearly 200, there are short biographies of these distinguished people, together with succinct accounts of their individual achievements. There are also reproductions of ancient documents as well as original publications on the subject of diabetes.

In this volume of 255 pages, matter is arranged chronologically in sections. These deal firstly with the early descriptive period, followed by the development of the subject in relation to the basic medical sciences and clinical medicine. The work of Banting and Best is highlighted and there is also liberal featuring of The American Diabetes Association. The author was its originator and first President. There is also a section devoted to the contribution made by a major American pharmaceutical firm to the early development of insulin on a commercial basis.

This book is something of a collector's piece. What a pity that several errors in type and spelling mar the production and that the poor standard of reproduction of some of the documents and early portraits diminish the pleasure this book gives to the reader. For example, Maimonides appears as a smudge on page 11 and very little can be deciphered from the leaf of Banting and Best's notebook on page 163.

However, the author succeeds well in his main purpose 'to humanize a body of facts which might otherwise be less interesting and more difficult to remember'. How welcome would be an extension of this principle if adopted by more authors on specialized subjects.

ROBERT SMITH

Surgery is Destined to the Practice of Medicine. SIR REGINALD WATSON-JONES. Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone, 1961. pp. 81. 21s.

The text of Sir Reginald Watson-Jones's Hunterian Oration at the Royal College of Surgeons is full of interesting historical side-lights, including the reminder that a flourishing Royal College of Physicians declined what a penurious body of surgeons accepted, namely the great Hunterian Collection, now sadly depleted by bombing.

Sir Reginald has made an independent contribution to the history of the Reynolds portrait of John Hunter, perhaps better known by Sharp's famous engraving, by having radiological studies made in collaboration with Mr. Ian Rawkins, scientific

Book Reviews

adviser to the National Portrait Gallery. The investigation gave no confirmation of Drewry Otley's assertion that, when the picture was far advanced, the fidgety Hunter had fallen into the reverie in which we see him depicted and that Reynolds 'turned the canvas upside down, made a fresh sketch with the head between the legs of the former figure, and so proceeded to lay over the former painting the colours of that which now graces the walls of the College'. The radiographic studies did, however, show overpainting of the face, which Sir Reginald ascribes to Reynolds himself, carried out four years after the original painting and after its exhibition at the Royal Academy and engraving by Sharp.

The rest of the oration was devoted to the elaboration of Hunter's dictum that 'this last part of surgery, namely operations, is a tacit acknowledgement of the insufficiency of surgery'. The preventive side of surgery was strikingly illustrated by 'horror pictures' of deformities of thirty years ago in a backward area from case books of Agnes Hurst, recently brought to light. A principal cause of a diminished need for surgery, concomitant with advances of its frontiers, has been knowledge gained from basic study. Of this John Hunter was the exemplar, and it is fitting that from the ashes of war scientific departments have arisen about his museum.

H. JACKSON BURROWS

Studies in Arabic and Persian Medical Literature. PROFESSOR MUHAMMAD ZUBAYR SIDDIQI. Calcutta University, 1959; pp. 173, 7 plates.

Arabian Medicine has received scant attention from modern medical historians, and although there have been papers on the subject in recent years, few full-length studies have appeared. The Fitzpatrick Lectures on 'Arabian Medicine' were published in book form in 1921 by Professor E. R. G. Browne. A two-volume work on the same subject, by D. Campbell, followed in 1926, while a more recent book, dated 1951, was Dr. Cyril Elgood's *Medical History of Persia and the Eastern Caliphate*.

Perhaps a lack of Arabic scholars accounts for the neglect of this important aspect of medical history. The work of Professor Siddiqi of Calcutta is therefore a very welcome addition to the existing literature. Professor Siddiqi, though not himself a medical man, is the son of a well-known doctor of Patna, and is well versed in his subject.

Arabian medicine is not usually credited with much originality, save perhaps in the fields of ophthalmology and pharmacology. Nevertheless, as the author points out, they did not slavishly adopt the Greek or Indian modes of thought, but rather adapted each to meet their own needs. As teachers they were pre-eminent, and the teaching was definitely clinical, as may be clearly seen from the accounts of clinical cases in Appendix I, pp. 117-25. They were also noteworthy as founders of hospitals. As early as A.D. 707, the first Arabian hospital was established at Damascus, and many other hospitals were founded, besides mobile dispensaries. In Baghdad, there were sixty medical institutions by the year A.D. 1160, and an even greater number at Delhi when it became the capital of Muslim India. Arabic medicine still has its influence in India today, and it seems desirable that western medicine should take some cognizance of the ancient and apparently outdated beliefs.

In the present work, the author gives a valuable account of the early medical literature of Arabian and Persian origin. He lays special stress on the *Firdausi'l-Hikmat*, or Paradise of Wisdom, by Ali b. Rabban of Baghdad (born A.D. 810), whose name is variously rendered as Ali b. Rayyan, or as Ali b. Zayn. This was the first