

### Book Reviews

the others being hardly worth recording. In view of the omissions it is odd that so much space is given in a guide to medical biography to such men as Keats, Sir Thomas Browne, and John Locke, whose fame owes little to their medical achievements.

Most of the biographies listed are out of print: what a pity, therefore, that those paperback editions now on the market were not indicated. The compilers could have got this information from the *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 1961, 49, 72–82.

The confused motives behind this compilation—for it attempts to serve the general reader, the librarian, and the student of medical history—are probably responsible for its failings. The price is far too high for what is little more than a reading-list.

E. GASKELL

*Purkyně-Symposion*, edited by RUDOLPH ZAUNICK, Nova Acta Leopoldina, Bd. 24, No. 151, Leipzig, D. A. Barth, 1960, 230 pp., port., illus.

Johannes Evangelista Purkyně (1787–1869) was among the leading physiologists of the nineteenth century. He was a pioneer histologist, being the first to use a microtome, and is remembered eponymously in a number of anatomical and other terms. After studying medicine at Prague he took the Chair of Physiology at Breslau in 1823 and in 1850 the similar Chair at Prague. He was a naturalist in the widest and best sense of the term as well as poet and Czech patriot. This is the man whose life and work was the subject of the symposium organized by the German Academy of Natural Scientists and the Czechoslovakian Academy of Science and held at Halle in October–November 1959. The proceedings of the symposium have now been edited and published as a special issue of the Nova Acta Leopoldina by Dr. Rudolph Zaunick. Among the distinguished contributors are several who have been responsible for the definitive edition of Purkyně's works (*Opera Omnia*, 7 vols., Prague, 1918–58) to which the present volume is a natural and most valuable supplement. As an example of the authoritative studies of Purkyně's work may be cited the papers on Purkyně as a physiologist (Kruta), as histologist (Frankenberger), and as pharmacologist (Sajner), while Professor Matoušek refers to documents in the Prague and Berlin archives which throw new light on Purkyně and his work, and Professor Kruta prints in an appendix letters to Purkyně from Johannes Müller. This is clearly a volume which no student of the history of physiology or the natural sciences in the nineteenth century can afford to ignore.

F. N. L. P.

*The Historical Development of British Psychiatry, vol. 1, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, by DENNIS LEIGH, M.D., F.R.C.P., London, Pergamon Press, 1961, 277 pp., 70s.

Dr. Leigh has rendered a service by compiling a lively record of British views and achievements in psychiatry during a chequered period of its growth. Compared with what has been written about the corresponding changes during the same time in France and Germany, historical surveys of development in this country are meagre and ill-balanced. Dr. Leigh has set out to redress this, using a biographical and bibliographic method. He brings us in touch with some men of very diverse abilities and character, who have influenced psychiatric thought. It is always open to question whether this approach gives a better understanding of what happened than would a more abstract appraisal of the pressure of social forces and ideas, but Dr. Leigh

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succeeds in conveying to the reader his own warm interest in the sturdy individualists who were fighting psychiatric battles a hundred and fifty years ago. The first third of his book deals with the physicians of the late eighteenth century; the rest with three men of considerable stature—John Haslam, James Cowles Pritchard, and John Conolly.

AUBREY LEWIS

*Arzt der Tyrannen*, by ARTUR SWERR, München, Süddeutscher Verlag, 1961, 420 pp., DM19.80.

There are two main methods of biography—one factual, the other fanciful. The latter consists of choosing a personage, preferably famous, or even more preferably, pre-Christian or early Christian, and weaving a romantic story around him, or, less likely, her. Nowadays, a sexually attractive or lurid cover on a paperback is an essential if the less discriminating reading public is to be tempted into buying or even sometimes reading it! As recent examples, *Spartacus* and *Ben-Hur* come immediately to mind. The Americans can be regarded as the major exponents of this ever-increasing trend in their efforts (however well intentioned) to spread 'literacy' throughout the world.

This book is a good example of the German contribution. As the blurb inside the cover says—'... it is a colourful and serious novel of ancient times, filled with adventure, history and a yearning for the purity of the soul!'

It concerns Democedes of Croton (550–460 B.C.), who practised as 'Stadtarzt' in Aegina, where he successfully dealt with an epidemic of Plague, acted as personal doctor to the tyrants—Peisistratos of Athens, Polycrates of Samos, and the Persian King Darius—the mightiest man of his time; how he married the daughter of the famous athlete Milo, how he lost her and his children and fled to Platea near Athens ... and so on'. It is 420 pages long, and is pretentiously divided into five papyri instead of chapters.

Peter Ustinov has written that nobody can fully guess at the comportment or mentality of, for example, the average Roman. Once he is given small talk he sounds modern, since it is impossible to conceive of ephemeral banter in any but our own idiom. This is very true of books such as this and is their greatest weakness.

*The Torch* is a similar novel by Wilder Penfield. It is based on the life of Hippocrates. In his introduction Penfield, in a spirit of self-abnegation, says '... it is reassuring for a surgeon to know that although failure in the literary field may cause indigestion or even loss of sleep, it is not apt to be followed by a funeral!' Maybe this is just as well for the author of this book.

I. M. LIBRACH

*Great Ideas in the History of Surgery*, by LEO ZIMMERMAN, M.D. and ILZA VEITH, Ph.D., London, Baillière, Tindall, and Cox, 587 pp., 115 illus., £6.

It was a good if not a great idea which originated in the minds of the authors when they decided to compose this book, which is put together in a novel way. The whole field of surgical history is surveyed and is grouped into nine parts or sections, each of which comprises accounts of a group of men representative of the surgery of that particular period. Extracts are also given from the works of the most notable of them so that the reader obtains first-hand information as to certain important elements in their teaching and practice.

The first section, called 'The Beginnings', includes a brief account of surgery in