

Book Reviews

relations that make possible the unique human attribute of language. Paul Maclean meanwhile speculates that it is the recent evolution of the granulo-frontal cortex in man that, in conjunction with the thalamocingulate centre, enables human beings to extrapolate from altruistic feelings for their immediate fellows to a concern for humanity as a whole. Anyone familiar with the history of the neurosciences in the last two hundred years will have no difficulty in finding analogous efforts to locate the anatomical substrate of mental acts or to provide an organic foundation for human values.

At least from the historian's viewpoint a more promising approach to the question of the humanity of the brain is to view the modern version of that organ as the product of human activity in determinate contexts. The question then becomes one of how the particularities of that context have structured the brain as we now know it. A few of the contributors to this volume—Londa Schiebinger, Leigh Star, and Anne Harrington—do accept the challenge of writing a history of the modern brain. Unfortunately all of these essays are slight and derivative pieces which add little to these authors' previous publications.

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JOHN S. HALLER, JR, *Farmcarts to Fords: a history of the military ambulance, 1790–1925*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, 1992, pp. xiii, 269, illus., \$32.50 (0–8093–817–2).

Is new life emerging from the dry and rather dusty field of military medical history? The publication of John S. Haller Jr's *Farmcarts to Fords*, hard on the heels of Terry Copp's and Bill McAndrew's *Battle exhaustion: soldiers and psychiatrists in the Canadian army, 1939–1945* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990) and Richard A. Gabriel and Karen S. Metz's *A history of military medicine* (Greenwood Press, 1992), would seem to suggest so.

In this innovative study, Haller narrates the story of the military ambulance from the battlefields of revolutionary Europe to the aftermath of the First World War. The book's focus is considerably wider than its title suggests. "Ambulance", in military parlance, refers not just to the various technologies employed to transport the sick and wounded from the front, but also to the mobile hospitals which operated just behind (and sometimes within) the field of fire. Focusing primarily on the British and American experience, the author examines the impact on military medical arrangements of changes in weaponry and tactics, innovations in medical science, new modes of transport, and the emergence of philanthropic organizations devoted to medical relief in times of war.

Drawing on a wide range of printed primary sources, Haller has provided a lucid and richly detailed account of a neglected subject. The narrative benefits greatly from frequent comparisons with developments in Germany and France, and is lavishly and usefully illustrated with over fifty plates. Yet Haller's account is, at times, rather superficial. The book lacks an over-arching explanatory framework or thesis, and often fails to develop adequately the many interesting themes it touches upon. Much more might have been made of medicine's importance in maintaining public as well as military morale, or of tensions between combatant and medical officers, for example.

However, it is not for the reviewer to prescribe what should have been written. As it stands, *Farmcarts to Fords* is a well-researched, readable, and welcome addition to the historiography of military medicine. Haller has rescued an important subject from the prolix and often uncritical official histories written on both sides of the Atlantic. His work is sure to stimulate further interest.

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