

Book Reviews

The Black Hole and Other Essays, by MACDONALD CRITCHLEY, London, Pitman Medical Publishing Co., 1964, pp. x, 288, 40s.

When Dr. Macdonald Critchley, the renowned neurologist, retires next year he will have served forty-two years on the staff of the National Hospital, Queen Square. During this time his contributions to neurology have been of the greatest importance. As well as being an excellent clinical teacher, and remembered by legions of students for his delightful lectures and demonstrations, he has written many books and papers on a wide variety of neurological topics. But in addition he has explored the historical and borderland aspects of his speciality and this book contains twenty-one papers which indicate the wide extent of these interests. The first, from which the book's title is taken, is an excellent account of the Calcutta tragedy of 1756. Next there are essays on the medical features of Oscar Wilde, Samuel Johnson, Alphonse Daudet, and of Anne, Countess of Conway; the detailed consideration of Johnson's aphasia is especially noteworthy. Short biographies of Henry Head, William Gowers, James Collier, Charles Sherrington, and Pierre Marie are followed by an account of the early days of the National Hospital. The last six papers deal with some of Dr. Critchley's favourite topics such as Huntington's chorea, and the punch-drunk state, and with his wartime naval experiences.

Each article has appeared elsewhere and it is a pity that their whereabouts is not recorded here. A more serious defect is the omission of all references. Nevertheless this is a very attractive book which all Dr. Critchley's many students and colleagues in particular will wish to possess, but which will also appeal to a wide audience, both medical and lay. Appearing as it does on the eve of his retirement, it will serve to remind us of a brilliant neurologist's work in the history of his discipline, as well as being, we hope a foretaste of future historical presentations. It would be appropriate if his purely neurological legacy could also be published in a similar form.

EDWIN CLARKE

Magic and Medical Science in Ancient Egypt, by PAUL GHALIOUNGUI, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1963, pp. xvi, 189, illus., 30s.

Pharaonic medicine was for nearly a century the exclusive province of egyptologists, and medical historians had to resort almost exclusively to the hieroglyphic interpretation of a handful of literary sources from Ebers (1875) to Breasted (1930) and Grapow (1954). Only recently in 1957 Sigerist produced a survey of the medicine in Ancient Egypt where social and economic factors played important roles.

Professor Ghalioungui analyses the magical background of Egyptian medicine as well as those sound medical practices established after centuries of repeated observations. The author has applied a broad academic and professional training to every medical papyrus or architectural remnant, exploring with clinical tests the popular medical practices still preserved in the Nile area. The result is a systematic dissection of magical elements, followed by the examination of the nine medical papyri. Their context is studied in detail with special emphasis on the Ebers and Smith papyri, the latter covering a complete chapter. The identification of bilharziasis, a number of surgical cases and several case histories are discussed extensively. In the following chapters the medical achievements of Pharaonic times are critically observed with a keen professional eye.

There are a few points where the reader may have wanted additional guidance, such as a short explanation of the intricacies of hieroglyphic interpretation, in order to have a better understanding of the complexities of the nosological identification in