

fo'c'sle-study running his naval household with the aid of an Admiralty of natural history suppliers and breeders, as well as experts like Lyell, Hooker and the young Huxley in every port. Beatrice Webb once likened Herbert Spencer to a spider collecting facts on the theoretical web he was spinning; the image equally well suits Darwin.

A pleasure to read, this exciting new biography deepens our understanding of Darwin as a geologist, biologist and human being. The sequel, covering Darwin's life of notoriety and fame after 1856, will be awaited with keen anticipation.

W H Brock, University of Leicester

Robert Rhodes James, *Henry Wellcome*, London, John Curtis/Hodder & Stoughton, 1994, pp. xix, 422, illus., £25.00 (0-340-60617-7).

Henry Wellcome remains something of an enigma, despite this sensitive and painstaking new biography. He probably always will. Robert Rhodes James leaves few avenues unexplored in his researches into Wellcome's life. Successful entrepreneur, pharmaceutical magnate and philanthropist, Wellcome would not, one suspects, be the first choice of a biographer free to pick his own subject. He is not and was not, as Rhodes James notes in his preface, particularly famous. Fame feeds biography, ensuring at the minimum a supply of anecdote and reminiscence to enliven the bare narrative of a life. Furthermore, Wellcome did not put many of his ideas to paper—a fact which Rhodes James considers one of his most intriguing aspects, but which must also have proved one of his most frustrating.

Nevertheless, the book presents a much more detailed account than has previously been available of Wellcome's life, beginning with his Minnesota childhood, the diligent years at pharmacy school and the intensely ambitious and successful period of his first positions, particularly with the firm of McKesson and Robbins. They were clearly reluctant to let him go, at the age of twenty-six, to join Silas

Burroughs in London. But in the end he left with, in effect, exclusive rights to sell their products in every country bar the United States.

The partnership with Burroughs, occasionally strained from the start, became at the end acrimonious and litigious. Those readers who already know something of this saga will find the detailed playing out of the dispute, with many extracts from letters between these two very different men, a fascinating and revealing part of the biography.

There is also much to be learned of that other great acrimonious dispute in Wellcome's life, his ill-fated marriage to Syrie Barnardo. Here however the author is hampered by the general paucity of sources and Wellcome's reticence. This is understandable to some extent, given the personal nature of the confrontation, but he has to depend more on Syrie's sometimes touching letters than on material which might elucidate Wellcome's views. Anxious always to think the best of his subject, Rhodes James is somewhat at a loss to explain Wellcome's seemingly harsh and absolute severing of any connection with his wife. Likewise he is perplexed at Wellcome's failure to visit his mother during the last years of her life, even though she was clearly dying of cancer and longed to see him. Money and occasional letters had to suffice.

Wisely avoiding any amateur psychologizing on these matters, Rhodes James concentrates instead on conveying the growing isolation of Wellcome following these episodes. Wellcome's later life was taken up almost entirely with the business, philanthropy, and the pursuit of hobbies, sometimes successfully combining all three. "Hobby" is not a term which Wellcome would have used to describe his forays into archaeology, anthropology and collecting, nor does Rhodes James, preferring to dub him a "scholar manque". Wellcome's great wealth and enterprise enabled him to organize projects on a grand scale, whether pharmaceutical research, archaeological digs or museum collecting. However, the largely outdated theories on which he based the latter two activities were derived from an amateur

enthusiast's reading of the literature. It might be more accurate to suggest that Wellcome had an inordinate respect for scholarship (which for him always meant "scientific" study) rather than thwarted talents in this regard.

Interestingly he appears to have been less directive of the scientific work closer to his own field which was carried out for the business or at the innovative research institutes which he founded. Here he was willing to give scientists a freer rein, and his talent scouting was sometimes (though not always) rewarded with men of the calibre of Henry Dale.

As this biography makes clear, Wellcome's own talent lay in business acumen and, at least in early and middle life, in that attribute known as "vision"—a sense of what might be achieved and how to go about achieving it. It is perhaps as a great facilitator that he is most accurately assessed, both in his own lifetime and subsequently. The business and other institutions he put in place now support an inordinate amount of research work by medical scientists and provide the international mainstay of scholarly work in the history of medicine.

A full exploration of how and why he was able to attain his achievements of course requires more than biographical study. The social, political and economic climates of his American birthplace and his adopted British milieu during his lifetime are clearly germane. However, this readable and authoritative work has much to offer on Wellcome the man, and will undoubtedly become the definitive "life".

Ghislaine Lawrence,
Science Museum, London

Michael Clark and Catherine Crawford (eds), *Legal medicine in history*, Cambridge History of Medicine series, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. xi, 364, £40.00/\$59.95 (0-521-39514-3).

Michael Clark and Catherine Crawford's collection of essays, *Legal medicine in history*, is a timely contribution to the growing literature on the relations between medicine

and law in the early modern and modern periods. While the essays do not constitute a comprehensive survey of the relations between law and medicine even in England, they do largely succeed in providing "a set of studies of the place of legal medicine in the social, legal, administrative and political histories of societies in which it has been practised" (p. 1). Indeed, one of the many strengths of the volume is its focus less on details of forensic medicine than on the changes in status of medical expertise in law and the varied uses to which medical knowledge could be put within particular legal and administrative systems.

The essays in the first half of the collection, dealing roughly with the period 1650–1850, are particularly well integrated and mutually resonant. Crawford's own excellent contribution provides a framework for understanding the structural impediments to the development of legal medicine within common law contexts during the early modern period. Crawford argues that the Continental Roman-canon system, based on judicially-led inquisitorial methods, was structured to foster legal scholarship and to rely on the testimony of experts of all sorts, including physicians, a process that resulted in medico-legal expertise being both valued and rewarded. In contrast, she finds, common law practices, based on jury-led decisions requiring no justification and on immediate oral testimony, provided scant space for considered expert opinion or for the written elaboration of technical arguments.

While not disputing Crawford's contentions about the structural implications of common law, the essays by Helen Brock and Crawford, David Harley, and Mark Jackson none the less demonstrate that during the period 1650–1850 medical testimony came to be relied on more regularly, especially during coroners' inquests. With this increased presence, they also contend, came an appreciation that medical testimony could be used "to introduce *doubt* as well as clarity into legal proceedings", thereby allowing juries to temper the severity of laws that no longer seemed consonant with public opinion. Jackson's study of infanticide in England and Mary Nagel Wessling's account