

## Book Reviews

century physiology and his impact upon the development of biology. The questionmark in the title is an indication of the author's uncertainty about this problem. This uncertainty concerns unfortunately the most important aspects of his work; Feurbach's influence upon his philosophy and his place in neo-materialistic physiology with Buchner and Vogt. It was especially hard for her to trace Moleschott's influence in Italy, and obviously she preferred the personal matters over the scientific and philosophical material, as can be read from her choice of the Bologna letters, of which she gives summaries at the end of the book. So the questionmark stays. But I enjoyed reading the romance of life of this intriguing personality. The three hundred bundles of letters and papers have to wait for a more profound study than proved possible for this publication.

A. M. Luyendijk-Elshout  
Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde van de  
Rijksuniversiteit Leiden

RENATO G. MAZZOLINI and GIUSEPPE ONGARO (editors), *Epistolario de Felice Fontana I: Carteggio con Leopoldo Marc' Antonio Caldani 1758-1794*, Trento, Societa di Studi Trentini di Scienze Storiche, 1980, 8vo, pp. vi, 396, illus., L. 16,000.

A few years ago Renato G. Mazzolini, a young and enterprising historian of science, launched the idea of publishing the correspondence of Felice Fontana, the famous physician. A scientific panel was accordingly set up, chaired by Professor Luigi Belloni, doyen of the history of medicine in Italy. The scope of the project expanded to such an extent that finally three distinct sections emerged: (1) works of Felice Fontana (in six volumes); (2) correspondence (five volumes); (3) works on Felice Fontana. Fontana's bibliography (edited by Peter Knoefel) and the book reviewed here comprise the first volumes of the entire project.

The editors' task has not been an easy one, since Fontana's papers have never been collected as a single archive (as was the case with the papers of, for instance, Spallanzani and Darwin). Fontana's own letters have had to be tracked down individually, while those he received have either been entirely lost or exist only as rough drafts or copies. (The quantity of similar unpublished material in Italian archives can only be guessed at.)

The correspondent treated in this volume is Marc'Antonio Caldani. The major topic is Haller's concept of irritability, one of the key concepts of eighteenth-century medicine, though there is also discussion of Fontana's research on the red corpuscles. In addition to the correspondence, this volume contains a lucid introduction, and each letter is appended by Mazzolini's own notes. The aim of the introduction has been to outline the scientific topics covered in the correspondence, and this aim has been amply met. The notes aim to tell us: (1) which works are referred to; (2) who are the individuals mentioned; (3) whether those individuals produced any extant correspondence with Fontana or Caldani; and to reproduce any drawings etc. contained in the letters.

In my opinion the editors have admirably achieved their aim in giving us a fascinating insight into the thoughts of two major physicians concerning some of the most debated and important scientific issues of their day. The book is highly readable for those who understand Italian, and is well suited to browsing. On the negative side, a minor disadvantage is the rather unattractive soft cover, and a major one is that to obtain the book in the U.K. it is probably best to apply direct to the publisher.

The appearance of this book bodes well for the forthcoming volumes of this series.

Mario A. Di Gregorio  
Darwin College, Cambridge

JOHN A. SHEPHERD, *Lawson Tait: the rebellious surgeon (1845-1899)*, Lawrence, Kansas, Coronado Press, 1980, 8vo, pp. xv, 249, illus. \$18.50. (Obtainable in the UK from the author, Liverpool Medical Institution, 114 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5SR, at £7.70 post free.)

Lawson Tait, like Joseph Lister, has now been dead long enough to attract a biographer more disinterested than a disciple would be and less reticent than relatives usually are. John A. Shepherd is far from totally disinterested. He is a surgeon, and this biography is hallmarked by

his enthusiasm for the technical wizardry of his subject. Shepherd makes a strong and competent case from within surgery for Tait's importance as having introduced major innovations into surgical practice. The most significant of these were principles rather than techniques. Tait, for instance, was one of the first surgeons to advocate laparotomy as a diagnostic procedure and insist that once a surgical condition of the abdomen was diagnosed, that operation should follow immediately.

These, and other, canons of operative behaviour were slowly developed throughout his life by a man whose forthrightness, truculence, and enthusiasm brought upon himself numberless petty quarrels, major legal actions, scandals, and intrigues. His birth was typical of the years to follow. Was he or was he not James Young Simpson's bastard son? Shepherd does not think so, but he has not come up with any more evidence than that originally presented by Tait's first biographer W. S. McKay. Following his student days in Edinburgh, Tait, after a brief period in Wakefield, finally descended on Birmingham, where his relative stature soon allowed him to establish himself in the gynaecological, social, and political life of the city. Tait's surgical career was characterized by his attempt to turn his hand to, and innovate in, most operations; then to publish a series of cases showing success well above average. He had a very confident sense of the value of his own discipline and waged continuous war against competitors in the gynaecological field, such as electrotherapists. Tait helped gynaecology *mean* surgery. Professionally, his career was marked by his battles with the London élite, his controversies with Spencer Wells, his opposition to Lister, and his support for the antivivisectionists. Tait, however, was no provincial conservative. He was a bold and enthusiastic early propagandist for Darwinian evolution and engaged in correspondence with Darwin on various natural historical matters. Nonetheless, Tait's observations in this area were, as Shepherd indicates, "rather amateurish" (p. 118), a judgment that begs an elucidation that this biography never quite gets round to making. The relationships between Tait's antivivisectionism, his evolutionary standpoint, and antagonism to antiseptic are never explored. One key might lie in the provincial metropolitan dichotomy and Tait's capacity to dominate in Birmingham what was possibly a mediocre scientific circle. How, if at all, are provincial medicine and anti-Listerism related? Tait's antivivisectionist pronouncements earned him scorn from London, but what response did they receive locally? Shepherd, in other words, has only opened up potential areas of investigation and not closed them. This is an excellent, down to earth, technical biography of Tait, but not, it must be hoped, the last word.

Christopher Lawrence  
Wellcome Museum at the Science Museum

DORA B. WEINER (editor), *Philippe Pinel. The clinical training of doctors. An essay of 1793*, Baltimore, Md., and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. x, 102, illus., £4.50 (paperback).

Philippe Pinel submitted this essay in 1793 as an entry to a competition sponsored by the Society of Medicine. The manuscript remained undiscovered in the archives of the National Academy of Medicine in Paris until 1935. Only in 1971 was the complete French text first published. In 1793 Pinel was on the edge of his years of medical fame. The Society of Medicine in that year invited essays which would "Determine the best method to teach practical medicine in a hospital". The memoir therefore is a particularly interesting document since it discusses, analyses, and prescribes for European and especially French medical education at a time of intellectual turbulence.

Pinel first establishes that medicine must be taught in hospitals, and then describes in outline the internal and external topography of the ideal hospital. Following this, he surveys the teaching of medicine in the various centres in Europe. Finally, he describes exactly how medicine should be taught. There can be few finer, short, lucid texts in the history of medicine that could serve as a better introduction to the main themes in late eighteenth-century medical thought. Environmentalism, hygiene, neo-Hippocratism, nosology, and nosography take on simple, flesh and blood meanings. What is surprising perhaps is the absence of any reference to surgery and surgical patients as a means of teaching pathology. This text seems tailor-made as a