

Book Reviews

history. The biographies vary in length from short paragraphs to several pages, and wherever possible they tell us about a person's hobbies as well as his professional interests. Perhaps one should say that too little attention is occasionally paid to the latter and that the compilers are somewhat idiosyncratic in their treatment of personal bibliographies. But in general the job is very neatly done and should act as a sound base for future biographers and historians. An appendix is included of biographies omitted from previous volumes.

E. GASKELL

An Introduction to the History of General Surgery, by R. H. MEADE, Philadelphia, London and Toronto, W. B. Saunders, 1970, pp. xi, 403, illus., £7.20.

This book of four hundred and three pages with seventy-four portraits sketches the evolution of the surgery of various organs and systems of the human body. In his preface, the author states that no attempt has been made to cover the specialities—after they became recognized as such. Despite this, there are chapters devoted to plastic and thoracic surgery and organ transplantation, but the development of neurosurgery is omitted. Other important subjects excluded are those concerned with the suprarenal glands, the sympathetic nervous system—and one of the commonest of surgical conditions—varicose veins.

The book opens with a chapter on the evolution of our knowledge of anatomy—up to the time of William Cheselden—and the work of Marie Velpeau and Paul Broca. It is sad that no mention is made of William and John Hunter. In the chapter on the management of infection, Sir Alexander Fleming is referred to as Arthur. There is no portrait of him. In dealing with fractures the author repeats the common error that Percival Pott sustained the fracture associated with his name. There is no reference to the important contributions of Lorenz Böhler—nor to the evolution of skeletal traction and the development of limb prostheses for amputees. Dislocation of the hip receives a few lines, but the common shoulder dislocation and the work of Kocher are not mentioned.

In other chapters there are many omissions—e.g. the contribution of Dos Santos to vascular surgery, that of Sir Thomas Dunhill to the surgery of toxic goitre, and that of Hamilton Bailey to the surgery of the parotic salivary gland. In a work of this kind the development of various endoscopic procedures surely deserves inclusion, while the omission of the practice of litholapaxy is extraordinary.

The chapter on rectal surgery is confused. Diverticulitis and ulcerative colitis are regarded as synonymous. There is no reference to the introduction of the barium enema by Abbé, or to the work of Paul of Liverpool. Lockhart-Mummery is referred to as 'Mummer'.

In an attempt to cover so wide a field, the thirty chapters are necessarily brief and fragmented. This, however, is compensated by a very extensive bibliography at the end of each—a total of over two thousand—an indication of exhaustive research by the author.

The book is eminently readable and apart from the omissions it provides the reader with an excellent basis for further study.

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