

### Book Reviews

The regimental surgeon was probably the most important officer in the army medical service, and would have repaid a study in depth, but many basic questions about him remain unanswered. Exactly what proportion of military surgeons for example, came from Scotland and Ireland, and how many were drawn from London, or the poorer areas of England? If they were apprenticed, what periods did their indentures usually cover, and had they frequent opportunities of attending the local hospitals? Was the number of those who studied medicine at the universities so low as is generally suggested—how many attended the courses without actually taking a degree? Furthermore, what was the total cost of an average medical education, and which families would be able to afford it? In all these respects, how did the military surgeon compare with the usual medical attendants of the poorer classes from whom the greater part of the army was drawn? It would be interesting to know the average age of the surgeon when first commissioned, the average length of service, and the number of and time between promotions. Information like this would help to build up a more realistic image of conditions within the medical service, against which the truth of contemporary comments could be tested, and even if the evidence for such an analysis were available only from the late eighteenth century onwards, the attempt would still be valuable. It must be admitted, however, that the history of the army medical department from 1642 to 1898 provides sufficient material for several studies, and these two volumes certainly ought to stimulate more interest in this hitherto neglected subject.

RUDOLPH E. SIEGEL, *Galen on psychology, psychopathology, and function and diseases of the nervous system*, Basle, S. Karger, 1973, pp. xii, 310, £17.10.

It is a remarkable paradox that a man who was so influential in the practice of medicine has suffered so much neglect at the hands of historians of medicine. Thus, studies on Galen have been relatively few until the last six years or so. One who has attempted to redress the balance is the American, Dr. R. E. Siegel, for this is his third book on Galen's physiology and medicine, the earlier volumes appearing in 1968 (physiology and medicine), and 1970 (sense perception). His original project is now completed.

Dr. Siegel is concerned with Galen, not with Galenism, and looks first at his ideas concerning the biological organization and integrative functions of the nervous system. Galen's concept of causality and his teleology are discussed, and then various nervous system activities such as autonomic control, form and function of skeletal muscle, neural control, nerve conduction, and the reflex. His psychology, especially as concerns the soul, consciousness and abnormal sense perception, his concept of temperaments, humoral types, free will and emotion, is next considered. Finally, there is Galen on causes of disease, and on diseases of the nervous system. As in his earlier books, Dr. Siegel documents his textual material thoroughly, and includes plentiful translated passages, many appearing here for the first time in English. There is an extensive bibliography, and the index refers also to material in the first two volumes of the series.

The book, therefore, is full of most interesting and useful data, but, as in Dr. Siegel's previous two parts of the trilogy, there are grave defects of methodology and of interpretation. First, throughout the book an attempt is made to interpret Galen's writings

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in the light of modern knowledge. This, of course, may be an effort to make obscure and apparently peculiar ideas of distant antiquity more comprehensible to the present-day physician. However, here we have whig history in its most blatant form, and it must be condemned as an unhistorical approach. In the brief summary of the book's contents given above, modern terms are readily noted: "integrative", "nerve condition", "sense perception", etc., which suggest to the reader twentieth-century ideas that must, therefore, have originated with Galen, although this is by no means always the case. For example, "integrative" now has a specific connotation when used in neurophysiology, and even if Galen was the first to have a holistic view of the nervous system, and this is not altogether certain, his notion was very far from the Sherringtonian model, as suggested by the word Dr. Siegel employs. Likewise when translating, Dr. Siegel introduces present-day words and, therefore, concepts: "tissue", "stimulus", "metabolic", "impulse", "fibre", "activate", etc., etc. He imposes modern terminology on ancient data that cannot possibly accommodate it.

Galen's writings on the nervous system in health and in disease have been closely analysed, but there has been no attempt to relate his thoughts, concepts, and arguments to the multifarious influences that must have been brought to bear upon him. It is not only necessary to know the effect on him of his predecessors' and contemporaries' medical and scientific writings, but also the role of non-medical factors usually referred to by the unsatisfactory collective term of "social". Admittedly this is a staggering task in the case of Galen, but this method alone will give us the real picture of a man who, together with the Hippocratic physicians and Aristotle, helped to shape medicine for nearly one and a half millennia.

### *Book Notices*

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JOHN MARKS, *The treatment of Parkinsonism with l-dopa*, Lancaster, Medical and Technical Publishing Co. Ltd., 1974, pp. viii, 165 [no price stated].

Science advances by means of planned research or chance observation. The use of levo-dopa in Parkinsonism is an example of the former, and Dr. Marks' excellent little book traces the sequence of discoveries from 1960 to 1970 by reproducing, in translation where necessary, the key papers. He also includes James Parkinson's original description of the disease, and provides a brief introduction to each selection, ending the work with a consideration of further problems.

There are two reasons why this is an important work. First it demonstrates one variety of research model used in the medical sciences, the kind that emphasizes the need for a rational development of therapeutic methods from basic studies in chemistry metabolism, pathophysiology, etc. Second it shows how very recent advances in medicine can be succinctly presented from the historical point of view, thus providing a means of understanding the increasingly complex present-day situation. It can be warmly recommended to neurologists, general physicians, and to all those interested in the evolution of medicine and in the scientific method.