

Book Reviews

JAMES L. O'LEARY and SIDNEY GOLDRING, *Science and epilepsy. Neuroscience gains in epilepsy research*, New York, Raven Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. xv, 287, illus., \$22.50.

It is claimed that this is "a historic monograph", but in fact it is an amalgam of pickings from what has been written already, especially the definitive work by Owsei Temkin, and a review of the more recent technical literature. The claim that ". . . nowhere else can the reader obtain so broad a perspective of the contributions of the pioneers in basic and clinical research. . . ." would be difficult to defend. Moreover the authors, although well versed in the subject and especially informative in regard to the more recent development of the research and clinical field of epilepsy, show disturbing, unhistorical interpretations of their material. As is so often the case with modern practitioners who view the past in the light of the present, statements occur such as "advances occurring with exasperating slowness", "stumbling steps", "he overlooked the importance of . . .", "the same errors persisted" and such like. Terms like "breakthrough", "explosion", "a new era", etc., suggest that the writers are often detecting what seem to them to be a historical sequence of events but which may not have been so at the time. In common with the present custom in English-speaking nations, the non-English literature is very unfairly represented.

The authors should have restricted themselves to the last century or so, for their discussion of this is the best part of the book. If taken with caution the historical material is valuable, and the authors' distinguished status as neurologists allow them to handle recent events with undoubted skill and authority. Throughout, there is full documentation, but notes and references are listed separately instead of being combined. Their interdependence reflects the text, which contains history (notes) and neuroscience (references) but not a fabric woven of the two.

WILLIAM COLEMAN and CAMILLE LIMOGES (editors), *Studies in history of biology*, volume 1, Baltimore, Md., and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. [x], 218, illus., £10.50

The editors have begun a new periodical containing in this the first volume three long essays: Arnold W. Ravin on 'The gene as catalyst; the gene as organism' (45 pp.); William Randall Albury on 'Experiment and explanation in the physiology of Bichat and Magendie' (84 pp.); Ruth Schwartz Cowan on 'Nature and nurture: the interplay of biology and politics in the work of Francis Galton' (65 pp.). Each is of high scholastic value and they provide a propitious opening for the series. There is a brief note soliciting papers, but it would have been useful to have had an account of editorial policy and other matters usually discussed in the first issue of a new serial publication.

Nevertheless, this one will offer authors a potential forum for articles that exceed the usually accepted journal length and yet are too short to be published as a book. The editors and their editorial board deserve congratulations for launching a new venture which will serve a useful purpose, supply a pressing need, and contribute importantly to the history of biology. They also warrant best wishes for a long and productive future. Their endeavour deserves wide support.