

Book Reviews

technical literature and records of the patent office. I hope Dr Fleischer will now pursue some of the issues he deals with so briefly and contribute further studies to history of medicine and pharmacy journals.

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LEWIS THOMAS, *The youngest science*, Oxford University Press, 1983, 8vo, pp. viii, 276, £3.95 (paperback).

Now in paperback, these are the reminiscences of the career of a successful, kindly, drily humorous, medical scientist. His most attractive trait is that of enjoyment. The son of a Flushing general practitioner, he moves through life, to Harvard, various residencies, Guam and Okinawa during the Second World War, Baltimore, Tulane, Minnesota, NYU and Bellevue, Yale, and the Sloan-Kettering, finding new ideas and new friends at each. That journey spans in time a transformation in medicine, both in therapeutic efficacy and in rational scientific understanding. Thomas himself got sold on modern immunology; he even likes (speculatively) to relate it to individual pheromones or to individuation of thought.

You can read these essays as a record of the success of modern medicine, and they certainly give the flavour of research-oriented practice. Is it a shade pleased with itself and its achievements? There is a bit more. He is candid about two sets of experiments, in each of which there was a promising lead which evaporated for reasons he could never pin down. Many a research worker will recognize that teasing, humiliating waste of time.

Better still, he gives an account, quite early in his career, of the admission of a young black musician, with a history of severe chills, now drowsy and apathetic. A blood test revealed first severe anaemia and then blood loaded with malaria parasites (he was a drug addict). Malaria was rare in Boston, and the staff and students spent that day seeing this novel case. During the early evening, the patient died, still untreated, when early quinine might have saved him. The house physician later read to the staff the first sentence in Osler's chapter on malaria: in effect, that any doctor who allows a case of malaria to die without quinine is guilty of malpractice. One respects Lewis Thomas for reminding us that there is a harder edge to medicine than just genial reminiscence.

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PIERRE PICHOT, *A century of psychiatry*, Paris, Dacosta, 1984, 8vo, pp. 189, illus., [no price stated] (paperback).

Emil Kraepelin's *Hundert Jahre Psychiatrie* appeared in 1918. It was a personal, occasionally idiosyncratic account of the shaping influences of nineteenth-century "Gesittung" on the management of insanity. One cannot help thinking that the publication, six decades later, of Pichot's book (and even its title) owe much to that earlier idea of asking a well-known psychiatrist to look back and then tell everyone, reassuringly, that things are not too bad in the present. The French professor has done just that in a book whose coverage of the crucial period between the 1880s to the Great War overlaps with that of Kraepelin.

In all fairness, however, the books are also different: whilst Kraepelin understandably concentrated on German views and wrote a book almost without references, Pichot is scholarly in his technique and tries to offer a balanced account of psychiatry in the three main countries, although, inevitably, the richest morsels are to be found in the chapter on French psychiatry.

This book will be differently reviewed by historians and by psychiatrists. For the former, a central question is, in what way does it throw light on the evolution of psychiatric ideas? For the latter, it is, does it reflect the present well? Pichot declares that there are several good works delineating the entire development of psychiatry (which does he have in mind, one wonders?) and rightly wants to produce one which concentrates on the nineteenth century and may