

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 (The quantity of similar unpublished material in Italian archives can only be guessed at.)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