

Book Reviews

Sir Walter Scott: the Wounded Falcon, by SIR ARTHUR S. MACNALT, London, Johnson, 1969, pp. 189, illus., 35s.

So much has been written about the Great Unknown, so many people have visited Abbotsford, so many have, in the past, read the Waverley Novels, that one wonders that anyone could find it worth while to pen yet another account of the life of that painful genius, Sir Walter Scott, and it was with some trepidation that your reviewer opened this book, certain that so small a volume would be trite, otiose and distorted. He was wrong.

Distortion there is: Sir Arthur's obvious admiration and love for his subject shine through every sentence, almost every word. No condemnation is to be found here for Sir Walter Scott's financial irresponsibility; nothing but condonation for even the worst of his works; no realization that his books have almost ceased to be read, that few are to be found who can quote even a few lines of *Marmion*; that the days of the great romantic have passed, probably for ever.

However, as one reads this book, one is borne on the tide of Sir Arthur's enthusiasm. Sir Walter Scott *was* a genius; the world *was* a better place because he lived; and Scotland was fortunate in her chronicler, whose writings were often worthy of the admiration of those with the old-fashioned qualities of patriotism and honesty. Sir Walter may have been a snob, but he was worthy of a better fate than was his; he inspired people in all walks of life with love and respect, and his endeavours to free himself from debt when physical breakdown and death stared him in the face, remind one of Marvell's lines, 'He nothing common did or mean, Upon that memorable scene.'

The chapter on the medical aspects of Sir Walter's life may be thought the weakest part of the book. One had hoped for some explanation in his medical history for Sir Walter's extraordinary drive, perhaps from the psychological effects of infantile paralysis, but the enquirer will find nothing but a few bare facts, too short and too commonplace to stimulate the imagination.

Old men often lapse into stupidities in their anecdoteage. There is no trace of old age in this last memorial to its author. This little book sparkles with bubbles from the Pierian spring, and all those who remember Sir Arthur with respect or, as many do, with a more emotional feeling, will be glad that it is a work so well done and, by its style and form, so suitable for a public who no longer have first-hand acquaintance with the works of Sir Walter Scott. In spite of careless proof-reading, we have here an excellent short biography of one of the world's giants, and a book which will serve well as a monument to its author and to its subject alike.

M. H. ARMSTRONG DAVISON

L'Enseignement de la Médecine en France des Origines à nos Jours, by CHARLES COURY (Collection 'Monographies de la Chaire d'Histoire de la Médecine'), Paris, L'Expansion scientifique française, 1968, pp. 200, no price stated.

Professor Charles Coury, who is one of the leading physicians at the Hôtel Dieu in Paris, is also the present occupant of the university chair in the history of medicine. Many of his predecessors in the chair have been content to give occasional lectures, but Professor Coury has been active in obtaining support to give his department a