

### Book Reviews

The present volume also includes a concluding chapter by Dr. Needham which summarizes the influences which have operated in the history of embryology from the speculations of the ancients to the birth of the science of experimental embryology as we know it today. Although the present book is entitled *A History of Embryology* it only brings the story to about 1800. The continuation to the end of the nineteenth century is hinted at as a project for the future.

To have produced a second edition of this well-known book is of course a great service to the history of medicine and biology in general but most readers will regret the rather abrupt ending. It is painfully reminiscent of the familiar phrase 'to be continued in our next', which punctuated the monthly instalments of the riddles of Sherlock Holmes. In what has already been printed we are told a great deal about the speculations of the ancients and of the restricted observations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the story breaks off just as we approach the age of experiment. We are left waiting for the continuation of the exciting story of the consequences of 'seeing what would happen if . . .' and all that developed from this attitude in the nineteenth century.

CUTHBERT DUKES

*Medical Museum Technology*. J. J. and M. J. EDWARDS. London: Oxford University Press, 1959; pp. 182. Illustrated. 21s.

A medical museum is often regarded as rather a dull place in which bottled specimens are kept to be brought out occasionally into the light of day for lectures or examination purposes. But there is no reason why it should be a dull place if modern techniques are used for the mounting and display of what Arthur Keith once described as 'Nature's own original documents'. In a similar way books about museum technology might be expected to be sombre literature dealing mainly with the preservation and mounting of medical curiosities and monstrosities. But here again there is no reason why this should be so and in this book by J. J. and M. J. Edwards we have practical proof that this seemingly unattractive subject may be made of absorbing interest.

The reason why the authors have succeeded in producing a readable book on a technical subject is because of the historical approach they have adopted. The book is divided into three parts dealing successively with museum technique up to the mid-nineteenth century, the discovery of formalin preservation and modern museum techniques. It is a fine example of the way in which 'dry bones' may be restored to life by a spice of history.

CUTHBERT DUKES

*Ancient Egyptian and Cnidian Medicine*. ROBERT O. STEUER and J. B. de C. M. SAUNDERS. London: Cambridge University Press, 1959; pp. 90. 22s. 6d.

*Ancient Egyptian and Cnidian Medicine* sets out to trace the influence of ancient Egyptian medicine on the medical practice of Cnidus, a Greek colony on the coast of Asia Minor: with reference, in particular, to etiological conceptions of disease. One important school of ancient Egyptian medicine held that *WHDW*, an etiological principle involved in putrefaction, was a basic cause of disease. This theory seems to have originated in Egyptian religious notions and to have been supported by observation of the process of mummification, for whilst the embalmer's duty was to prevent putrefaction in the dead body the task of the physician appeared to be that of preventing it in the living body!