

Book Reviews

JEAN CANTLIE STEWART, *The quality of mercy. The lives of Sir James and Lady Cantlie*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1983, pp. vii, 277, illus., £9.95.

The author's account of her grandfather's work, both as a surgeon and as the pioneer of voluntary first aid services in Britain, is based on her desire to record his achievements as examples of Christian virtue – "the story of man's duty to his neighbour".

The early chapters are devoted to an account of James Cantlie's upbringing in the north-east of Scotland, graduation in medicine from Aberdeen University in 1873 and subsequent appointment to Charing Cross Hospital as demonstrator in anatomy. Here he developed his interest in the teaching of the principles and practice of first aid, formed a voluntary medical staff corps representing the London teaching hospitals, and extended his lecturing to virtually all classes of the civilian population, in association with the St John's Society.

Between 1887 and 1896, the Cantlies were in Hong Kong, where he practised as a surgeon. His involvement in the founding of Hong Kong Medical School, his meetings with Sun Yat Sen, Yersin, and Kitasato are described, together with his interests in tropical diseases. On returning home, Cantlie launched the *Journal of Tropical Medicine*, was involved in the founding of the London Postgraduate Medical School and the School of Tropical Medicine, and continued his work in the organization of first aid services.

Paradoxically, as a result of the achievements of the VAD nurses during the 1914–1918 war, the professional nurses were led to establish a College of Nursing in order to regulate and protect their status.

Much of this account makes pleasant and interesting reading, but the author's habit of capriciously juxtaposing facts which are either unrelated or of markedly unequal significance, is irksome and suggests that she does not always appreciate the scientific significance of her material. This is not a critical historical study but a loving account of two people who devoted their lives to Christian medical principles and achieved a great deal. We must thank the author for recording the story of their work.

B. I. Williams
The Wellcome Trust

NELLY TSOUYOPOULOS, *Andreas Röschlaub und die Romantische Medizin. Die philosophischen Grundlagen der modernen Medizin*, (Medizin in Geschichte und Kultur, ed. K. E. Rothschild and R. Toellner, vol. 14), Stuttgart and New York, Fischer, 1982, 8vo, pp. viii, 259, DM. 58.00 (paperback).

The readers of the classic histories of medicine by Julius Pagel, Garrison, and Diepgen will find little that is positive or even informative about Andreas Röschlaub (1768–1835). It is only with the reassessment of German Romantic medicine of recent years that Röschlaub, at the time one of the movement's most celebrated and controversial figures, is beginning to emerge from a curious combination of obscurity and notoriety. This work of reassessment and indeed rehabilitation by Erna Lesky in an article of 1954 on Cabanis, in two articles (1967 and 1969) by John Neubauer, and in a significant sequence of contributions in the 1970s by Guenter Risse, is now joined by Nelly Tsouyopoulos's major study of Röschlaub.

In an opening section, Dr Tsouyopoulos shows how Röschlaub's fate in the histories was determined first by the heated divisions within *Naturphilosophie* and then, decisively, by his rejection together with the whole of Romantic Medicine as a wildly speculative aberration by Rudolf Virchow (1865) and others in favour of the new scientific medicine. Her study is the first to do justice to the full spectrum of Röschlaub's work and thought, which ranged coherently from hygiene, through theoretical medicine to practical therapy and its consequences for the organization of clinical practice and the medical profession, a very different picture to the conventional one of a confused Brunonian obscurantist.

The two seminal influences on Röschlaub were Adalbert Marcus, who ran a teaching hospital in Bamberg and under whom he studied from 1793, and John Brown, whose views he adopted for his doctoral thesis of 1795. Contrary to the popular view, what attracted Röschlaub to Brown was not some simplistic formula but a dynamic and unified conception of health and sickness embedded in a single life process. This meant that for Röschlaub physiology was con-

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cerned with all organic phenomena and thus embraced pathology. Furthermore, fever was seen by Röschlaub not as disease *per se* as hitherto but as a symptom of an anomaly in the normally balanced relationship between the organism and its external environment. But above all, Brown's theory of excitability offered an intellectual basis for therapy. Tsouyopoulos shows convincingly that the crisis of conflicting medical philosophies at the end of the eighteenth century was largely caused by a failure to relate the practice of clinical medicine to theory with the result that the eclectic school were able to pay lip-service to innumerable contradictory theories while adhering to a conservative case-based therapy in the name of the Hippocratic tradition. Following Kant's critical philosophy, however, an acute need was felt to provide medicine with a general scientific foundation that would give both satisfactory theoretical explanation and consistent guidelines for treatment. Röschlaub believed that the excitability theory provided that basis with its underlying notion of a biological continuum both in analogy with and in counter-distinction to the physical continuum of the exact sciences. This independent biological continuum afforded medicine the possibility of producing adequate theories of pathogenesis and a concept of the individual as "a totality of life processes rather than as previously a mere sum of physical properties" (p. 219). Physiology was thus the unifying and primary discipline for medicine.

Röschlaub's reputation could possibly have withstood intellectual controversy and perhaps even the dissolution in 1805 of his friendship with Schelling, whose eventual analogy of the magnetic, electrical, and chemical processes with three "dimensions" of the organism, reproduction, irritability, and sensibility, he found medically unhelpful. But behind the growing hostility between the two exponents of the early *Naturphilosophie* were the machinations of others who felt threatened by Röschlaub, his former allies Walther, Döllinger, and Marcus, while beyond them were the vested interests of practitioners whose livelihood would have been endangered by Röschlaub's demands for proper clinical treatment of illness on a social scale. If all this were not enough, Romantic medicine itself was to fall into disfavour as the positivist approach from France gained ground, to the point where Karl August Wunderlich in 1859 dismissed it as mere hollow theory divorced from all empiricism, a myth that survived for nearly a century.

As far as Röschlaub is concerned, that myth is now finally dispelled by Dr Tsouyopoulos's book. It is, however, to be recommended for more than putting the record straight. Its coverage is excellent, looking with lucidity not only at Röschlaub's work in the many areas of his interest, but also critically at the context both of contemporary medical theory and Romantic philosophy. She shows that Röschlaub and his versions of *Naturphilosophie* provided the basis on which physiology and science could be introduced into medicine. Ironically, that medicine was later to reject both Röschlaub and his views as "unscientific". But, above all, she reminds us that Röschlaub's brand of Romantic medicine, his concept of the dynamic interdependence between organism and environment, today seems far more modern and acute in judgement than the myopically somatic approach of his later belittlers.

Nigel Reeves
University of Surrey

HORACE W. DAVENPORT, *Physiology 1850–1923. The view from Michigan*. (Supplement to *The Physiologist*, vol. 24, no. 1, February 1982, 4to, pp. vii, 96, illus., \$25.00.

The American Physiological Society has had a more than ordinary interest in the history of the field that it represents. For some thirty years, the Society has actively sought out the reminiscences of its senior members and it has regularly made space available in *The Physiologist* for historical articles. In late 1983, the society announced the formation of a section to be devoted to history. The work under review thus does not stand in isolation, although it is unusually ambitious and detailed, which presumably explains why it has appeared as a supplement rather than an article. This monograph is an excellent local institutional history; it documents with great care matters of purely local interest while making plain, where appropriate, the national and international importance of individuals and events.

Davenport treats his subject chronologically and with a heavy emphasis on biographical details about individuals important in the development of the department. He provides information about the scientific interests and publications of members of the department and he also