

## Book Reviews

'On Ageing and Old Age. Basic Problems and Historic Aspects of Gerontology and Geriatrics'.

M. D. GRMEK. *Monographie Biologique*, vol. v. No. 2. 18 December 1958.

As man's life expectancy constantly extends, so all aspects of the ageing process become increasingly important. Serious contributions to the history of gerontology and geriatrics, have, however, been few and so this monograph by Dr. Grmek of Zagreb is particularly welcome.

After considering definitions of terms, the author reviews the many theories of ageing put forward since the Hippocratic writings, in which a loss of *innate heat* is considered to be an adequate explanation. The several stages of ageing, together with its manifestations, are next dealt with, and then a chapter on longevity; many outstanding examples of the latter are quoted but they all have one feature in common—the absence of a birth certificate. Man's perpetual but unsuccessful quest for a method of rejuvenation is discussed, and there follows a section on the history of the treatment and prevention of diseases in the aged which forms a quarter of the work. After a short chapter on the history of atherosclerosis, the author describes the psychological and social aspects of the problem of ageing and he ends by discussing the increased attention now being given to it.

Dr. Grmek has amassed a lot of information from a meticulous and wide survey of international literature; there are 277 references. At times, however, the work tends to be a catalogue and the author is occasionally uncritical and his inferences are debatable; for example, the account of Osler's 'fixed period' is misinterpreted. Apart from a few peculiar words and constructions, the English is good.

This is a useful source-book of the historical aspects of growing old, and as such it will be of value to the geriatrician and the historian alike. There is still a need, however, for a work dealing with the historical, philosophical and sociological aspects of old age, and their inter-relationships.

EDWIN CLARKE

*Milestones in Modern Surgery.* ALFRED HURWITZ and GEORGE A. DEGENSHEIM.

London: Cassell & Co. Ltd, 1958; pp. xvii. + 520. Illustrated. £5 12s. 6d.

This beautifully produced, large and expensive book by two New York surgeons consists of thirteen chapters devoted to haemostasis; anaesthesia; the *milieu intérieur*; wound healing and infection; surgery of head and neck, breast, hernia and gastrointestinal tract; intestinal obstruction; thoracic and cardiovascular surgery; the soul of the surgeon; milestones on the horizon. Each chapter contains prefatory comments; a short biography of the architect or architects of the particular milestone, with a portrait; and his 'surgical classic', reprinted or translated in full. The authors were guided in their choice of 'milestones' by the following criteria:

- (1) That the paper was of such importance that it represented a significant advance in surgery;
- (2) That the paper was well written and that it demonstrated the scientific method;
- (3) That the principle or operation described, whether in its original form or some variation thereof, is still of current value.

While many readers will quarrel with the selection of certain milestones, all will read this book with interest, with profit and with intellectual stimulation. Though the title speaks of 'Modern Surgery', Ambroise Paré's account of the dressing of wounds is included as having stood the test of time. Bassini's paper from *Archiv für klinische Chirurgie*, 1890, is the only classic found in the chapter on 'Surgery of hernia', while 'Surgery of the gastrointestinal tract' contains three contributions, by

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Billroth, Anton Wölfler and Ernest Miles. Gibbon's mechanical heart and lung apparatus in cardiac surgery and J. P. Merrill's homotransplantation of the human kidney between identical twins are the 'Milestones on the horizon'. It is noted that two-thirds of the contributions are American. There is an index of eight pages.

W. R. BETT

*Amid Masters of Twentieth-Century Medicine.* LEONARD G. ROWNTREE. Springfield, Ill.: C. C. Thomas; Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1958; pp. 684. 87s. 6d. Most people would agree that an illustrated history book is much more valuable than one consisting only of text.

In all my poor historical investigation [wrote Thomas Carlyle], it has been, and always is, one of the most primary wants to procure a bodily likeness of the personage inquired after; a good portrait if such exists; failing that, even an indifferent if sincere one.

Dr. L. G. Rowntree who has practised for fifty years as research worker, teacher, clinician and medical administrator, sets out to attempt the laudable task of presenting a panorama of twentieth-century medicine in the light of his own wide experience and illustrated by portraits of many of those contributing to the scene. He naturally deals mainly with American medicine and amongst many other topics considers in detail the origins and development of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, the Mayo Clinic and the Rockefeller Institute. The result is a chatty conglomeration of personal reminiscences intermingled with mainly anecdotal biographical references to individuals encountered during his professional life and travels. It seems that every medical practitioner the writer has ever met is included, but despite the title of the book, only a small percentage qualify for the epithet of 'master'. His accounts are at times alarmingly frank although there is little that his subjects could take exception to and his approach is usually a charitable one. He also adds accounts of selected persons who have been outstanding in the progress of medicine in the present century, but whom he has not met, and some, like Einstein, whose influence on medicine is less obvious. The book is mainly a revealing and well illustrated presentation of American medicine but if it is like Carlyle's alternative demands concerning portraits, it is at least sincere, and the personal information concerning individuals is interesting and often new.

As such it is a readable description of fifty years of medicine as well as an interesting account of an American physician's experience and contacts, but it cannot be recommended to those who are seriously interested in the evolution of modern medicine. In the first place it is full of inaccuracies, a defect perhaps of less importance when the author is describing his holiday activities; he tells us for example that he visited 'the Lorna Doone country' whilst in the Lowlands of Scotland, and saw Stirling Castle near Carlisle. But when mis-statements concerning other men are recorded, this is a more serious matter. How can we trust the accuracy of a writer when we read that Sir Henry Head's contributions to medicine won for him 'the Noxen medal from the Royal College of Medicine, his M.R.C.S. and six years later his F.R.C.S.'? The literary style is indeed 'factual and understood by all' as the introducer tells us, but it would be more accurate to say that it is replete with the vernacular. Concerning progress in cardiology, we are told 'the opening guns of the heart campaign were fired by Sir James Mackenzie'. Furthermore the number of textual errors is considerable.

Although it is admittedly difficult to assess one's contemporaries adequately, all