BOOK REVIEWS


The author of this work—Deputy Surgeon General John Henry Sylvester (1830-1903) served in the Indian Army as a medical officer from 1854-1875. The "Recollections" were written after his return to England in 1875 and, being intended primarily for his own interest rather than for publication, give his frank views and opinions of people and events. Sylvester's keen eye for detail is matched by the descriptive power of his pen and in his company, sword in hand, the reader gallops along through countless battles and skirmishes. I use the term "sword in hand" advisably and not "scalpel in hand" as his interests were far more military than medical. The "Recollections" are therefore those of a cavalry officer and as such should be read, as there are very few details of his medical experiences. As one who has served in Jhansi I read his account of his activities there during the Mutiny with special interest. What Sylvester brings home to me with the utmost force and vividness is the intolerable heat and climatic conditions under which many of the campaigns and battles were fought and how heavy were the losses resulting.

When one puts down a good book of Military Memoirs one does so with regret and with the feeling that one is taking leave of an old friend whose adventures and frolics one has shared. Such is not the case with the "Recollections" as Sylvester's restless nature, bitterness, carping remarks and obsession with money make one bid him adieu without regret. His prime misfortune—one is almost tempted to say tragedy—is that he was an Army Medical Officer. With his temperament he should either have been a civilian doctor or a combatant officer; by following both Mars and Aesculapius he achieved the worst of two worlds.

The editor has carried out his task with sympathy and skill and the footnotes are a model of their kind. Two small errors are noted viz.: On page 16 the footnote on Surgeon Charles Machard should read (1807-1882) and not (1807-28); and on page 65 in footnote 2 "Cave frescoes" should read "Cave frescos".

The book is well produced and illustrated. Despite the Author's rather unattractive character the "Recollections" can be strongly recommended as one of the best first-hand accounts available of fighting in India in the middle-nineteenth century.

A. MACLENNAN.


The author spent three years on the western front as a Regimental Stretcher-bearer. He gives a straightforward and objective account of his experiences with a happy absence of introspection, self-analysis (and self-pity) which one has come to associate with World War I diaries and accounts.

The absence of introspection is not due to any lack of sensibility but is due to the writer's robust spirit and self-discipline. Nobody can read this diary without being moved by the courage, humility, religious faith and patriotism which lightens its pages. By its very objectivity the diary brings forth the fearful clarity not only the horrors of the battlefield but—what the present generation forgets—the acute physical discomfort in which the troops existed.

And when one notes how continuously the troops were in action, how heavy their loads, how pitifully inadequate their rest periods and leaves were one is moved with wonder and admiration at the way they stuck it—not just for a week or a month but for years. From his diary it is clear that the author's basically courageous nature was sustained by his religious beliefs, his patriotism and his humanity.

As one would expect from such a man there is an almost total absence of bitterness towards either friend or foe and it is about the only World War I diary written by a front-line soldier in which snide remarks about the staff, supporting troops and rear echelons are completely absent. Instead, when his sadly depleted battalion in a moment of crisis is reinforced by drafts of A.S.C. men, Mr. Dunham is the first to pay tribute to their value and good musketry.

The Editors have done their work well and have let Mr. Dunham tell his own story in his own words; two small errors are noted—on page 13 "M.C." should read "M.O." and on page 34 a disarming footnote informs the reader that "TAB" stands for "Tetanus Anti Bodies"! O Sir Almroth Wright truly thou hast lived in vain!

Unlike most publisher's blurb the description of the book printed on the inside of the dust-jacket is excellent and it is to be hoped that should a future edition be called for it will take its place in the introductory chapters of the book—it is far too good to be lost with the wrapper. A good map of the Western Front showing the main towns mentioned would add much to the value of the book.

To sum up this is a splendid volume which should be read by every member of our Corps. Thank you, Mr. Dunham.

A. MACLENNAN.


This handy-sized book is based on the instructions given to the new house-surgeons at Maryfield Hospital, Dundee. House surgeons everywhere will find concise guidance on the many practical problems they face: on qualifying. All of us will find the sort of instructions and guidance we should give.

A sound and authoritative textbook on tropical medicine for nurses. Should have a place on the book shelves of all School of Nursing Libraries.

J. M. ORFORD.


This is the revised and re-edited edition of Helen Heardman's booklet. It is designed for the use of physiotherapists and mothers to be and gives a clear and concise explanation of the events of pregnancy, labour and puerperium.

All sections are adequately illustrated with simple line drawings. I think the basic criticism, as of all similar works, is that only the more intelligent mother is likely to benefit.

L. W. PAGET.


The title of the book is confusing in that the contents consists of descriptions of the method of orthopaedic examination rather than differential diagnosis of orthopaedic conditions.

As a guide to the correct examination of joints, muscles, nerves and bones it can be recommended. Measurement and accurate recording of these are stressed.

The book is of value to those who have little or no knowledge of the examination of Orthopaedic cases. It is easy to read, small in size, would facilitate clinical examination and would improve clinical recordings.

G. I. SMALL.


The title of this excellent text book should be enlarged to include Dental Practitioners as well as Dental Students. While its primary purpose is to assist students in preparation for their examinations, it is of equal importance to the busy Dental Practitioner who has no time to delve into the large standard Medical works.

In this book essential medical facts likely to be of dental interest, can be found quickly and easily, and are presented in a clear and concise manner. It has now reached its second edition and new material has been included on appropriate topics such as cardiac arrest and the coagulation mechanism. In addition the final chapter on common drugs was found to be of particular value.

E. D. STANHOPE.


It might be said that a textbook on medical treatment running to three editions within five years is a reflection on the rapid advances on therapies which to which we have become accustomed. This concept can hardly be substantiated. Thus it is that this textbook has justly deserved its popularity. It has been compiled primarily for students and practitioners. A work of this size cannot cover therapies in detail nor can it scope satisfy the specialist. But this has been overcome to some extent by a section of selected up-to-date references. The list of contributors is impressive and Dr. Havard has by his editing produced a concise, readable and valuable textbook. At to-day's prices the cost of £4.25 must be considered good value.

R. G. MACFARLANE.


The area where the disciplines of medicine and psychology converge is a difficult one to delineate. This is reflected in the uneasy but fruitful relationship which exists between clinical psychology and psychiatry, where the psychologist seeks to apply general truths to the particular and the psychiatrist to generalise from his findings with individual patients. But psychological medicine stands to gain as much from the laboratory science of psychology in the future as internal medicine has from physiology in the past.

One difficulty in the past has been that books incorporating substantial, authoritative, accounts of academic psychology have leaned heavily on the traditional laboratory animals. As someone once said, "all men are rats to some extent; some more than others, but no man is a rat altogether". Where universities were enlightened enough to include psychology in the basic medical sciences course it was sometimes nullified by its preoccupations with the fate of the rat in the maze, leaving to the medical student the difficult task of integrating this knowledge with his rudimentary understanding of human nature.

It is essential however that medical studies include the behavioural sciences in addition to their later clinical applications: Not least because the doctor is assumed to be competent in these matters and other associated professionals such as social workers are educated in this field. As Professor Ferguson Rodger and Dr. Mowbray point out", since the first edition of this book was published in 1963, psychology has become established in the curriculum of almost every Medical School."

As a consequence a generation gap is emerging in the profession between younger doctors with some psychological sophistication and their seniors with little or none. This book provides an opportunity to doctors to bring themselves up-to-date in this area.