

Book Reviews

Constantin von Monakow: Vita Mea. Mein Leben, ed. by A. W. GUBSER and E. H. ACKERKNECHT, Berne and Stuttgart, Hans Huber, 1970, pp. 323, front., S. Fr. 47, DM. 42.

The establishment of research institutes devoted to the investigation of cerebral structure and function began during the 1880s in central Europe. Heinrich Obersteiner, Paul Flechsig and Constantin von Monakow were pioneers in this development. The roots of this trend may be seen in the emergence of histological methods (sectioning and staining) and the pursuit of experimental neurophysiology and pathology during the latter half of the nineteenth century. As a result it became possible to investigate the internal organization and microscopic structure of the human brain, to endeavour to elucidate any relationship to cerebral function, and to apply any consequent knowledge to neuropsychiatric diagnosis and therapy. As research of this scope grew, it became clear to some investigators that special laboratories equipped for multidisciplinary studies would be needed. One of these far-sighted and enterprising investigators was Constantin von Monakow in Zürich.

When he died on 19 October 1930, von Monakow left an autobiography which was deposited in the Central Library of Zürich, where it rested for four decades. Following the death of his last surviving daughter in 1967, several hundred letters addressed to von Monakow, as well as autobiographical sketches and various scientific manuscripts were turned over to the Zürich Medizinhistorisches Institut. In working up this material, the editors became aware of the manuscript autobiography, which they found to be not only of great importance for the history of medicine and science but also of great human interest. By publishing this document, which has been edited and provided with an introduction, as well as excellent explanatory footnotes and a bibliography, the editors have made a valuable contribution to the history of brain research.

But they have put us even further in their debt by making it possible for a remarkable man to reveal much of himself to a later generation. Von Monakow was the scion of a noble Russian family, who overcame numerous difficulties and handicaps to achieve a world-wide reputation as a medical scientist. Having lost his mother at the age of four, he was raised by strangers, since his father more often than not was away on business and personal matters. In 1863, when von Monakow was ten, the family left Russia and after a short stay in Germany settled in Zürich. Upon completing his erratically conducted secondary schooling, he resolved to study medicine, a decision which contradicted his father's wishes and led to a complete break between them. Thenceforth von Monakow made his own way. During his student days, he began to work as an assistant at Burghölzli which was then directed by Ed Hitzig who together with Fritsch provided the experimental basis for the doctrine of cerebral localization. While still a student he also visited von Gudden in München, where he was introduced to experimental techniques and the use of the microtome. The receipt of the M.D. in 1877 was followed by an attempt to set up a practice which failed, and a period of indecision, but in 1878 von Monakow obtained an assistant's post at St. Pirminsberg where he began his scientific investigations in cerebral anatomy and its clinical correlates. In 1885, at the age of thirty-two, he moved to

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Zürich where he became 'privat-dozent' for neurology, the first appointment of its kind in Switzerland. The following year in a borrowed room in the Pathological Institute, von Monakow assisted by a young American zoologist, Henry Donaldson, established the laboratory which was to become the Hirnanatomisches Institute. Von Monakow developed a very active private practice, first as a general physician and then as a specialist for neuropsychiatry; these activities were conducted chiefly in a private clinic which he established in 1887. At the same time, he also gave courses on brain anatomy, as well as on electrodiagnosis and therapy. In 1897, he published his classic book on brain pathology; a second expanded edition appeared in 1905. Yet, despite international recognition of von Monakow's scientific work, the Zürich medical faculty opposed his appointment as professor. Not until the cantonal government overruled the faculty in 1894 by creating a special chair did von Monakow receive his professorship. In 1910 the Hirnanatomisches Institut was officially established as a university unit. Throughout most of this period, von Monakow supported his research and the laboratory largely out of his own pocket.

The full story cannot be presented here, but anyone interested in the subject, in medical research, and in the story of an indomitable personality should read this book. Von Monakow was largely self-taught as an investigator, but he knew what he wanted to do and pursued his goal zealously and energetically. One can only end by admiring the man revealed in this autobiography.

The book is well made, easy to read, and has a good index.

GEORGE ROSEN

History of Medical Illustration, by ROBERT HERRLINGER, London, Pitman Medical and Scientific Publishing Co., 1970, pp. 178, illus., £7.00.

Professor Herrlinger died in 1968, much regretted, at the peak of his career. One of the few men to have been trained both in medicine and in the history of art, he possessed the many different skills that are so essential in the writing of a book such as the one under review. If he had lived he would certainly have produced a further volume or two; as it is, fortunately for us all, that task has been undertaken by one of his colleagues.

Herrlinger's book is neither anodyne nor aggressive, for on almost every page it challenges, stimulates and provokes without ever antagonizing the reader—as so many books do—with displays of arrogance. Always its arguments are presented in a civilized fashion, and always they are backed up with apt pictorial comparisons and references to other learned workers in this field, such as Sudhoff, Wickersheimer, Wiegand, Cushing, Rath, Roth and Kellett. A rich meal by itself, it tempts one in the direction of more side-dishes than are good for any normal digestion; but the author can hardly be reproached on that score.

Among the many questions he asks are: does the distinctive squatting posture of the 'five figure series' derive from models of a primitive fertility goddess, or does it copy the position in which corpses were laid down for dissection?; were 'indication lines' or pointers first suggested by cautery irons in medieval illustrations?; was the influence of Islamic art greater than Sudhoff and his successors were prepared to allow?; was Vesalius moved to commission the *Fabrica* portrait of himself simply