

### Book Reviews

because he came from a region famous above all for its portrait painters?; and so on, and so on.

When he is not busy posing questions, Herrlinger does his best to provide answers. For example, he demonstrates the persistence of classical motifs through the Middle Ages (citing an eleventh-century Byzantine MS in the Laurentian Library, Florence) and into the Renaissance (e.g. Vidius Vidius); he discerns similarities between the title page of the *Fabrica* and a woodcut in Terence's *Comoediae*, 1497; he is disinclined to adopt a belittling attitude towards Estienne and other pre-Vesalian anatomists, and indeed goes out of his way to establish the modernity of Lorenz Phryes (1518) by contrasting his illustrations with the medieval-like woodcuts of Magnus Hundt (1501); he makes an informed but all too brief investigation of Leonardo's artistic techniques; he compares the copper plates of Eustachius with the woodcuts of Vesalius, and studies plagiarists of the latter; and to round things off he prints a selection of title-pages from sixteenth-century medical books, relating them to contemporary developments in art. To all this, Dr. F. N. L. Poynter contributes an affectionate and lucidly written 'In Memoriam'.

The book is technically well produced; the colour plates are excellent, and G. Fulton-Smith's English translation reads fluently. There is only one flaw: the chart from Singer's article 'The herbal in antiquity' (*Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1927) has been printed with the legends in German, and not—as one would expect in this translation—from the original English.

E. GASKELL

*Biographies Médicales et Scientifiques, XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Jean Astruc, Antoine Louis, Pierre Desault, Xavier Bichat), ed. by PIERRE HUARD, Paris, Roger Dacosta, 1972, pp. 327, illus., Fr. 90.

The book under review is intended to open a series of bio-bibliographical monographs, three or four to a volume.

The editor of the present work is not satisfied by many of the previous biographies of physicians and scientists. He feels that they have often been marred by panegyric anecdotes, genealogical details and a wish to provide the reader with 'amusing literature'. A new type of scholarly and more inclusive presentation does indeed seem desirable, although we should not like to lose such a work as Sir D'Arcy Power's *William Harvey* in the 'Masters of Medicine' series (1897).

Since the present generation is fortunate in possessing some excellent biographies written by its predecessors, the way is now open to add new features to that species of historical writing. In view of the already available literature, the biographer of 1972 is dispensed from the duty of delivering his data too rigidly and he can turn to lesser-known items.

Professor Huard and his co-author M. J. Imbault-Huart have used this opportunity very felicitously. To give one brief example: in the first biography of the present volume, that of Jean Astruc, the biographers present his life and works in a concise form and thus give space to other, lesser-known, items which have been presented in greater detail. These items are; first, the interest of Astruc in Chinese medicine, and his very informative questionnaire on venereal diseases sent to Peking, which is fully

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reproduced on pages 15–19, together with the answers received. We may add that this is a rare specimen of the acquisition of guided information so early as the eighteenth century; second, a passage on Astruc's share in forming a theory of reflex movement.

The last biography in the present volume, which much surpasses the preceding ones in bulk (137 pages) is that of Xavier Bichat; a posthumous publication of a work written by Maurice Genty (1961), whose earlier and smaller contributions to the *Biographies Médicales* (1927–1936) we have repeatedly used with profit.

Antoine Louis, the distinguished French mid-eighteenth-century surgeon, was strongly dissatisfied with his family name which could easily be mistaken for a forename. However, he would probably have derived delighted satisfaction from the elegant biography, included in the present volume some 180 years after his death. Of course, he should not be mistaken for his namesake Pierre-Charles-Alexandre Louis (1787–1872) who has achieved greater international renown through his introduction of statistical methods for the evaluation of therapeutic procedures.

The fourth biography is of Pierre Desault, who is here compared (pp. 147–51) with his contemporary John Hunter.

A pleasant feature of the book is the inclusion of detailed bibliographies following the voluminous references. They have been arranged as follows: manuscripts with exact guide to their location; printed books and papers; general bibliography of printed material on the subject; listed iconography.

The authors must be commended for their scholarly and readable work and the publishers for the beautiful and richly illustrated edition.

J. O. LEIBOWITZ

*A History of the Nigerian Health Services*, by RALPH SCHRAM, Nigeria, Ibadan University Press, 1971, pp. xxvi, 480, illus., £4.50 (£1.75 paperback).

This book fulfils admirably what its author set out to do. It is a comprehensive—even compendious—account of the development of health services in Nigeria from the earliest days until 1960, the year of Independence.

By virtue of his teaching appointments in Nigeria, Scotland and Uganda, Dr. Schram has had an unrivalled opportunity of studying his subject both on the field and in libraries in several countries, where he has had access to original documents and archives. A probing mind and an innate curiosity have led him into the fascinating byways of the earliest contacts between Western medicine and indigenous culture in Nigeria. He traces the story of the Niger expeditions, with their tragic trail of sickness and death, and the pioneer thrustings of the missionary doctors.

The colonial medical service is seen to grow from the modest beginnings of barrack medicine and the care of the isolated expatriate communities into attempts at extensive though thin medical coverage of the vast areas of this populous country. Malaria, leprosy, sleeping sickness, and yellow fever provide successive challenges to the doctors whose training fitted them more for curative medicine in the growing centres of population than for preventive medicine and mass treatment in the bush.

The saga of Ibadan is told, with the vision (and incomprehensible oversights) that eventually brought into being a first-class teaching centre, to be followed by Lagos,