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inflammation centred round the phagocyte. Appendices on Ehrlich's application of aniline dyes to the identification of the different leucocyte series are capped by a sketch of the subsequent fate of the Blastema Theory in England, France, Germany and the U.S.S.R. which brings the story up into a surprisingly modern context.

This book brings to the reader a bright colourful section of early nineteenth century investigations of inflammation and the white blood cells. The interpretation of its features is skilled and balanced; it well reflects the maturity of the pathologist and historian who produced it.

KENNETH D. KEELE

The History and Literature of Surgery, by JOHN S. BILLINGS, New York, Argosy-Antiquarian, 1970, pp. 132, \$10.00.

Dr. John Shaw Billings was a man of many parts—surgeon, medical historian, librarian, hospital planner—who did nothing badly and most things excellently well. His literary output was large and can never be quite superseded since he always wrote with style and from a close knowledge of his sources. Hence our pleasure at seeing once more in print his very useful guide to the history of surgery which originally appeared as the first chapter to vol. 1 of the *System of Surgery* edited by F. S. Dennis in 1895 (Philadelphia, Lea Bros.). The pity of it is that the new publisher fails to acknowledge this provenance!

Even today there are few works on the history of surgery which cover the literature freshly and systematically (as this one does) without drowning themselves in a welter of words. In his introduction, which is now unaccountably (purposely?) left out of Argosy's reprint, Billings modestly says that 'the most I can hope to accomplish in this paper is to furnish to the physician who has little time, taste, or opportunity for consulting the original documents the means of ascertaining the periods and places in which the leading surgeons of the world have done their work'. No-one has ever done the job better.

There is no use carping about the few mistakes in the text, such as the description of Henry Hickman as 'a London surgeon' and the failure to mention Liston in connection with ether anaesthesia. Far better to stress its virtue as a concise compendium of basic useful information some of it in the form of throwaway remarks from which modern historians may still occasionally profit. As an example of the latter we might cite the passage on J. C. Crosse where we learn that his library 'came into the possession of Professor S. D. Gross and was destroyed by fire in Louisville'—a point which has been overlooked in Mary Crosse's recent biography of her great-grandfather.

A surprise of another kind is Billings' observation, perfectly true in 1895 but no longer today, that 'operative surgery is now, as it probably always has been, practically unknown among the Chinese'. Statements like this make one realize what the twentieth century is all about.

E. GASKELL

Hypochondrie, Melancholie bis Neurose. Krankheiten und Zustandsbilder, by ESTHER FISCHER-HOMBERGER, Berne, Stuttgart, Vienna, H. Huber, 1970, pp. 152, *front.*, SFr. 25, DM 23.

'Fashionable diseases' are the subject of this penetrating study. Each age has its fashionable disease, and similar symptoms are explained by whatever disease is

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fashionable at the time. The process is unconscious as each medical theorist is convinced he has at last found the real basis of the symptoms characterizing such diseases as *melancholia* in antiquity. This disease persists right through the Middle Age and the Renaissance but during the seventeenth and eighteenth century is slowly displaced by *hypochondria* which, until then, had meant something different. In the nineteenth century *hypochondria* is superseded by *spinal irritation*, *neurasthenia* and *hysteria*, which latter has quite a history of its own. *Hypochondria* slowly turns into *nosophobia*, the fear of diseases, which since Bleuler in 1916 has ceased to be disease and has become an attitude of mind. *Neurasthenia* turned in the twentieth century into *neurosis*. Dr. Fischer-Homberger omitted to mention that *spinal irritation*, too, lives on as a 'slipped disc'.

Far from being a mere exercise in semantics, though this is a fascinating aspect of it, this book represents a thoroughgoing, abundantly documented treatment of the subject. We hear what Homer, Hippocrates and Galen meant by *kholos*, *khole*, *khondros* and *hypokhondria*. Robert Burton regards *hypochondria* as the most unpleasant form of *melancholia*. Thomas Bartholin, when dissecting, finds that there is no duct from the spleen into the stomach that could carry black bile. J. J. Waldschmidt (1644–89) finds that black bile is altogether non-existent.

The whole thorny question of the nature of mental diseases and their interaction with the body is involved here, including the history of the idea of the 'soul' in medicine. Dr. Fischer-Homberger remains a sceptic from start to finish and never falls into the error of Goethe's Wagner who boasts 'how wonderfully far we have progressed'.

MARIANNE WINDER

Observations on Midwifery, by PERCIVALL WILLUGHBY, facsimile of 1863 ed., with a new introduction by J. L. Thornton, Wakefield, Yorks., S. R. Publishers Ltd., 1972, pp. xvii, 345, £3.50.

Make haste to obtain a copy of this little masterpiece whilst stocks last for it is a book to possess rather than to borrow. The reprint of Willughby's *Observations in Midwifery* has been delayed for too long and Mr. J. L. Thornton earns our gratitude for making good this defect; for now is made available a clear concise account of the practice of midwifery in England before the use of the obstetric forceps. As such it is of absorbing interest to medical historians, obstetricians, midwives and particularly to teachers of midwives.

The Introduction to this reprint gives Mr. Thornton the opportunity to give a scholarly account of the manuscripts of Willughby's work, the earliest known being Sloane MS. 529 in the British Museum. A translation in Dutch was printed in 1754 together with some writings of the Chamberlen family, possibly because they both described the use of the lever. Henry Blenkinsop purchased a copy of the manuscript in 1845 and it was not until 1863 that he printed his edition of Willughby's *Observations*, limited to one hundred copies only. The work has been out of print until the publication of the edition now under review.

Percivall Willughby (1596–1635), the sixth son of Sir Percivall Willughby, was educated at Rugby, Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford, and then apprenticed to a barber surgeon. In 1631 he married one of the daughters of Sir Edward Coke and