

Book Reviews

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 His literary output was large and can never be quite superseded since he always wrote with style and from a close knowledge of his sources.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