

## Book Reviews

and short-sighted policies in the management of both human and ecological resources, leading to high and irretrievable losses in both, and a consequent decline in her fortunes in the West Indies. It provides fascinating and almost obligatory reading for those interested in medicine and West Indian history.

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JOHN D. FRENCH, DONALD B. LINDSLEY, and H. W. MAGOUN, *An American contribution to neuroscience: the Brain Research Institute, UCLA, 1959–1984*, Los Angeles, University of California Brain Research Institute: UCLA Publication Service Department, 1984, 8vo, pp. vii, 325, illus., \$37.50.

California is the home of many remarkable institutions, and after only twenty-five years in existence the Brain Research Institute of the University of California at Los Angeles qualifies for this epithet. To relate early in its career the way in which it was created, how it has developed, and its multifarious activities, together with accounts of its founders (three of whom are the authors of this admirable survey) and of its staff and their research demonstrates commendable enlightenment. Admittedly, historical perspective is hereby to some extent sacrificed, but, on the other hand, personal aspects of plans, negotiations, research, and aspirations can be recorded by those who have been closely involved with the early years of a thriving centre of excellence. Historians of the future will welcome the details and the intimate biographical sketches, material that may not be available for future commendatory volumes. The wide range of neuroscientific researches carried out at the Institute is especially noteworthy and will be reviewed by others. However, amongst them is a Neuroscience History Program under the guidance of Dr Louise H. Marshall, which is devoted to the history of the neurosciences in America. Its achievements, together with those at UCLA in medical history before the BRI was established and due to the enthusiasm and scholarship of Professors Magoun and C.D. O'Malley, Dr M.A.B. Brazier, and others are impressive.

It is of interest to note that the only other comparable enterprise was not begun until 1984, due in this case to the inspiration and efforts of Oxford's Waynflete Professor of Physiology, Colin Bakemore. As far as the history of the neurosciences is concerned, our American colleagues have provided us with a stimulating challenge.

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JAMES THOMAS FLEXNER, *An American saga: the story of Helen Thomas and Simon Flexner*, Boston and Toronto, Little, Brown, 1984, 8vo, pp. xviii, 494, illus., \$24.95.

This volume is both less and more than the biography that Simon Flexner wanted his son James to write. It is the story of the lives of Simon Flexner, founding director of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research and later doyen of medical science in the United States, and Helen Thomas up to the time they married in 1903. It is also the history of two vastly different families, and what the author sees as the quintessential Americanism of their union. Simon was born in Kentucky to poor German Jewish immigrants, who were less than enthusiastic when in 1890 their son went to Baltimore for the medical training he needed to convert the family's drugstore in Louisville into a pathological laboratory. Helen was a descendant of Maryland's first European settlers, and grew up in an aristocratic Quaker family in which feminism, idealism, and religious fervour were dominant themes. The connecting link was the Johns Hopkins University, where Simon pursued pathology at the medical school that Helen's father helped establish.

Digressive, anecdotal, and sometimes very speculative, this is not a book written primarily for the professional historian, medical or otherwise. Yet even the confirmed pedant is likely to be satisfied by the study's contribution to medical history. The narrative is based principally

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upon manuscript sources, many not previously exploited and some in private hands. Insights abound into not only Simon's career, presented on a decidedly unheroic scale, but also the many lives he touched during these years – including Hideyo Noguchi, William Osler, William Welch, and the author's uncle (and writer of reports on medical education), Abraham Flexner. If some of the description of late-nineteenth-century American medicine is tediously familiar, the intrinsic interest of the sections on Helen's relationships with Bertrand Russell and with her sister Carey (feminist and president of Bryn Mawr College) compensates in full.

The crafting of this work shows the narrative skill that won the author a Pulitzer Prize Citation for his biography of George Washington. For the medical historian, a couple of evenings spent with *An American saga* make a splendid busman's holiday.

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BARBARA SICHERMAN, *Alice Hamilton. A life in letters*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. xvi, 460, £20.00.

Alice Hamilton (1869–1970) is best known through her 1943 autobiography, *Exploring the dangerous trades*, as a pioneer in American industrial medicine. This elegantly written and carefully edited volume of Hamilton letters provides more than a new biographical perspective on a medical field. Drawing upon her extensive knowledge and sensitive melding of medical and women's history, Sicherman presents us with a richly textured "life in letters" of one of the twentieth century's more remarkable human beings.

Hamilton came of age as a woman physician in the late nineteenth century, caught in the strictures of Victorian gentility yet entangled in the excitement of social reform and the promise of medical science. The letters, and Sicherman's generous introductions, provide wonderful insight into how Hamilton struggled with these conflicting tensions to redesign industrial medicine and actively participate in critical political and social events.

Medical historians will find particularly interesting the details of her skill in gaining entry into industrial plants, her solutions to a wide variety of occupational health problems, and her ways of handling the outrageous institutional discrimination against her, particularly as the first woman faculty member at Harvard. But the meaning of her life will be diminished if historians read only to learn about this part of her commitments. Her importance as a central figure at Chicago's famous Hull House and in women's international peace work is crucial to understanding Hamilton as an individual and physician-researcher. It is impossible to comprehend either her medical or social reform work alone.

Unlike the autobiography written with insight but self-consciousness at seventy-four, this collection of letters allows us to see Hamilton as she creates herself, personally and publicly, till the very end of her long life. As a "work in two voices", Sicherman allows Hamilton to control the book, but not to overwhelm it. This volume is a fascinating example of how far an edited collection of letters can take us, but also how much more it makes us want to know. A full-scale biography of Hamilton is still very much needed.

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JOHN DUFFY, *The Tulane University Medical Center: one hundred and fifty years of medical education*, Baton Rouge and London, Louisiana State University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. xiv, 253, illus., [no price stated].

From the time he wrote *The Rudolph Matas history of medicine in Louisiana* (1958), John Duffy has been the acknowledged authority on the medical history of New Orleans. Accordingly, when Tulane University wanted to commission a history of its medical centre in