

### Book Reviews

*The World of Ramon y Cajal. With Selections from his Nonscientific Writings*, by E. HORNE CRAIGIE and WILLIAM C. GIBSON, Springfield, Illinois, C. C. Thomas, 1968, pp. x, 295, illus., \$9.75.

Ramon y Cajal was certainly an extraordinary man and this is an extraordinary book. On the very first page is a very satisfying map; it depicts with clarity the precise situation of those isolated places, otherwise difficult to locate, in which Cajal spent his adventurous childhood.

The authors modestly claim that their first objective is to present a personalized account of the origins of this great Spaniard. This is done by a brilliantly executed travelogue. We are intimately conducted from Cajal's birthplace by devious and sometimes hazardous routes (one can almost see the taxi-driver and his seedy Renault) through villages and countryside to Madrid and beyond—from harsh surroundings to the Nobel Prize and much more. It is indeed fortunate that the guide on this pilgrimage is one of Cajal's former pupils, who himself writes with feeling, and with the understanding of a distinguished scientist and author. No aspect of Cajal's career escapes attention and, in addition, we receive many an insight into the general history and ancient culture of Spain.

The second aim of the book is to bring together in one easily accessible place a selection on the literary rather than the scientific works of this great man. The inclusion of so many of Cajal's nonscientific writings is another commendable feature. His thoughts and essays cover a very wide field indeed and it is particularly gratifying that so much of Cajal's philosophy is here presented. 'Recollections of my Life' is an amazing chapter.

The authors' objective has been superbly accomplished in a fluent literary style. Within the compass of 295 eminently readable pages, we follow the astonishing career of this wayward rebellious youth, with his transient apprenticeships to a barber and to a shoemaker. Medical studies did not come easily to Cajal. He saw military service in Cuba and was afflicted with tuberculosis before embarking on those momentous biological researches which brought such lustre to Spain.

Every doctor and scientist should be familiar with this incredible life-story, and there is no better guide than this volume. It will appeal to an extensive circle of readers. In fact, the reviewer can think of no one who would not profitably enjoy a perusal of these pages. There is plenty of encouragement here. Before success, Cajal had frustrations in abundance. Before triumphs, there was adversity. The scientist of eminence will here find plenty for reflection. The keen boy, who happens to be dull at school, will receive the stimulus he rightly deserves.

The chapters are short, carefully chosen, and stripped of all verbosity. The numerous illustrations are perfectly placed in relation to the text. Altogether this is an admirable book—an exciting account of a truly remarkable man and a picture of emerging Spain which is indeed unique.

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