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he regarded as his College, and took great delight in the ceremonial aspects of the presidency. He designed the coat of arms, and the President's gown in which his portrait was painted by J. B. Souter in 1932. There, robed and stern, he stares down, daring anyone to cross swords with him. When his term as President came to an end he refused to hand over the gown to his successor. He kept it and was buried with it, if not in it.

In 1934, after Blair-Bell had relinquished all official connexions with the College, he wrote its history, and attached to it some extraordinary instructions: that it should be published "not sooner than fifteen years after my death and not until after the death of the last surviving member of the Finance and Executive Committee". The history opens with: "The soul's awakening is not a sudden blinding revelation of a ray of sunshine bursting through the clouds, it is the slowly reached realisation of the truth: it is the harvest that follows the sowing of the seed." The conditions imposed were unnecessary; the "history" is unpublishable. Sir John Peel, leaning over to be fair, admits it is "rather tedious reading, and would never have been regarded by Blair-Bell himself as in a suitable condition for publication."

Here, then, was a man who achieved much through energy, and monstrously tenacious ambition; a man who was regarded by his junior staff not with affection but respect mixed with awe and fear. Those who found him likeable seem to have been colleagues who toed the line or those too senior to be quarrelled with. He found his friends amongst the members of the gynaecological visiting society that he created. His home life was, to say the least, mysterious. He married his cousin Florence in 1898. There were no children and for the next thirty years until her death in 1929, "she remained a shadowy figure". None of the Blair-Bell's colleagues ever met her, not even those who worked most closely with him. There were rumours that she occupied a separate part of the house, that she suffered from mental illness. Certainly, in her final illness she was nursed in part of the house which had no connexion with the part occupied by Blair-Bell. After her death, as if in expiation, Blair-Bell endowed a lectureship in her name, named a house after her which he presented to the College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and arranged for her portrait to be hung in the house. The portrait was painted posthumously from an old photograph.

A biography of the founder of an institution, published by that institution, and written by a former President could easily have been a standard exercise in hagiography. Sir John Peel is to be congratulated for producing a full and balanced account of this disturbingly complex, odd, difficult, and successful gynaecologist.

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PIERRE GUILLAUME, *Du désespoir au salut: les tuberculeux aux 19e et 20e siècles*, Paris, Aubier, 1986, 8vo, pp. 376, Fr. 175.00 (paperback).

Pulmonary tuberculosis has a long history, but has been little considered by modern historians. Pierre Guillaume's elegantly written, highly readable and perceptive study makes a welcome addition to this sparse literature. In recent years, medical history has turned increasingly towards the patient, yet (as Irvine Loudon has remarked) insights into the experience of illness in the past are rare. Guillaume gives us just this for tuberculosis. Contrary to popular modern myth, tuberculosis was not a gentle or romantic killer: it was terrible, and it was feared and concealed. The agonies of the poor were hidden in hospitals like the Paris Hôtel-Dieu, of whose records Guillaume makes dramatic use, while contemporary convention demanded that the educated and wealthy continued to participate fully in life, despite advanced illness. Guillaume reveals all the desperation and the terror of the tuberculosis victim, the full horror of night sweats and insomnia, the constant fear of haemoptysis, the pitiable and sordid decline of the body towards dissolution. This evocation of the mental and physical state of tuberculosis is a major achievement of creative writing, and a triumph over the bare clinical descriptions with which previous writers have been content.

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The book is, however, far more than a psychological study of the tuberculous. It is a meticulously conceived work about tuberculosis in France, with intriguing sidelights on the differing experiences of other European countries. Whereas in Spain and Italy, and elsewhere in Southern Europe, the disease was considered contagious and its victims treated as lepers, ideas were more ambiguous in France and Northern Europe. The observation in the later eighteenth century that tuberculosis was plainly not contagious in the same way as smallpox and other acute infectious diseases, produced the theory of hereditary transmission or hereditary susceptibility, and with it a medical conspiracy of vagueness, whose primary purpose was to protect the victim and enable him to enjoy the protection of society. As a result, the researches of Villemin and Koch (here clearly and beautifully expounded) produced little but an ethical dilemma lasting nearly a hundred years in France. In spite of the intervention of the Rockefeller Mission in 1917, tuberculosis mortality remained higher than that of any other industrialized country until 1949, and the disease was made compulsorily notifiable only in 1963.

Most aspects of tuberculosis, from despair in the eighteenth century to salvation in the twentieth, are examined here. The attitude of the victims to their own suffering; the ideas of the medical profession on causation and treatment, and the real nature of the doctors' function; the social and physical geography of the disease; attempts at control and prevention in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the claustrophobic world of the sanatorium, and its reluctant disappearance (ninety per cent of French sanatorium physicians were themselves former tuberculosis victims, and identified totally with the world of the *sana*) before the power of streptomycin; all these are illuminated by Guillaume. The only dimension to the story which escapes detailed examination is the attitude of the healthy to the sick: although Guillaume repeatedly stresses the horror which the disease aroused in French society, he quotes no instances of, for example, local resistance to the siting of sanatoria, such as occurred in Britain. Added excitement comes from Guillaume's sensitive use of historical, and especially literary, sources to illuminate the experience of the tuberculous; his handling of this tricky method is exemplary.

The book itself is very nicely produced, clearly printed, with a splendid cover picture. Like many French works, it is rather under-footnoted, and it is a pity that English spellings in the bibliography were not checked more carefully. Quibbles apart, Pierre Guillaume set out to restore the image of tuberculosis as the most feared of killers before our own age, in which it was replaced by cancer, and now more fittingly perhaps by AIDS, and he has succeeded. *Du désespoir au salut* deserves to become a classic of both medical and social history, and should be read by all with any interest in the world we have lost, and in the problems of our present.

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JEAN-FRANÇOIS BRAUNSTEIN, *Broussais et le matérialisme. Médecine et philosophie au XIXe siècle*, Paris, Méridiens Klincksieck, 1986, 8vo, pp. 326, Fr.130.00 (paperback).

Braunstein sees the phenomenon of Broussais largely as a by-product of the French Revolution. Certainly, Broussais the man was shaped by the political events of his youth. The son of parents who paid for their republican sympathies with their lives, Broussais served in the armies and navy of the Republic, and later followed Napoleon on his campaigns in the Low Countries, Austria, and Italy. Throughout his life, he retained a seemingly paradoxical—but not uncommon—loyalty to both the tricolour and the imperial eagle. Of the two, however, it was the ideals of the republic to which Broussais owed ultimate allegiance.

Braunstein wishes to go further and to maintain that Broussais' *thought* needs to be seen as the—or at least a—"medicine of the French Revolution" (p. 263). He finds echoes of the revolutionary ethos in the utopian, heroic, and simplistic aspirations of "physiological medicine". This is a tendentious claim: it is at least arguable that the true nidus of Broussais' system is to be found not in the legacy of the Revolution, but in the tradition of grandiose eighteenth-century speculative medical systems, of which Brunonianism is the outstanding