

telling; a lesson relevant to the application of all technical procedures involving physics to clinical medicine.

In their introduction the authors evaluate the history and present-day status of electrocardiography; and this, apart from their unduly optimistic opinion that 'fortunately truth finally prevails and the best ideas supervene', they do with sage wisdom. They emphasize both the advantages and limitations of the technique in clinical medicine. They point out that the 'application of instrumental and physical specifications for electrocardiography have been over-extended, and some have been grossly erroneous'. This warning against the spuriously 'scientific' application of the basic sciences to clinical medicine has been necessary for the last three centuries, which hold innumerable examples of erroneous medical practice founded thereon. By their confinement to oblivion few, ignorant of the history of medicine, know of them, or their danger in our own time. This warning is perhaps particularly appropriate to our own generation, tempted as we are to clothe all our clinical observations in physico-mathematical dress.

It may surprise many outside the field of cardiology to be told that 'attempts to reduce any problem in electrocardiography to fundamental bioelectric phenomena . . . are at present entirely empirical'. From this it follows that interpretation of an E.C.G. is also empirical; that it is an art not a science, as is the interpretation of many clinical signs. In this lies the danger of the use of the instrument by inexperienced persons.

From the point of view of medical history this book focuses perhaps too closely on its particular technique. Thus, for example, by its omissions it gives the impression that cardiac arrhythmias were quite unknown before the use of the electrocardiograph. For some arrhythmias this is indeed true. But just as the authors give Galvani and his successors praise for their recognition of animal electricity, so Harvey deserves mention for his experimental observations of all degrees of heart block; and others, Vesalius and Morgagni for example, for their descriptions of such cases, clinically recognizable in retrospect today.

The candid and simple way in which the story of electrocardiography is told in this book will make it a source of real pleasure to cardiologists and senior physicians, and it provides a fine introduction to the subject for young doctors, medical students and electrocardiographers.

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*Lebensbilderbuch eines Nervenarztes*, by I. H. SCHULTZ, Stuttgart, Thieme, 1964, pp. xii, 166, DM 25.

Paradoxically, medical autobiography is rarely the stuff of history, even where the subject has given something great to the world. Professor Schultz, now an octogenarian, is well known on the Continent for his revival of hypnosis and self-hypnosis ('autogenic training') and many popular psychological books and articles. He weaves into his account in chatty vein his contacts with the great and not so great, and sketches of cases.

Most of his life as a successful psychotherapeutic practitioner was spent in Berlin and linked with the German Society for Psychotherapy, the presidency of which Kretschmer resigned in 1933 when Jung stepped into the breach to be followed later by a *Reichsführer für Psychotherapie*—Goering's doctor-brother. To all these changes the author adjusted successfully.

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