

Book Reviews

Anatomies of Pain. K. D. KEELE, M.D., F.R.C.P. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1957; pp. x+206. Illustrated. 27s. 6d.

Research into the fundamental problems attendant upon the experience of pain has attracted some of the finest intellects throughout the ages. This is not to deny, however, that a great deal of nonsense has been written around this topic, and not only by our remote forebears. The subject is a vast one and has shown signs of getting a little out of hand. Pain offers itself as a problem masked in quite different guises according to whether it is a metaphysician, a theologian, a practising doctor or a physiologist who is the inquirer. At no time more than the present has there been a greater need for a clearing-house of opinions and observations upon the topic of pain. Dr. Keele has put us in his debt by dint of this scholarly monograph. As a historian of medicine, Keele has painstakingly traced the slow evolution of our knowledge (and our prejudices) concerning the nature of pain and its anatomophysiological correlates. His researches begin with the Egyptian and Babylonian civilizations and pass steadily forward by way of Greek and Arabian medicine, up to the twentieth century. We are clearly instructed into the earlier conceptions as to the essential organ of personal identity, and the rival claims of heart, stomach and brain are shown to have continued for many centuries. This quest also tied up with the cognate search for the seat of the soul and the *sensorium commune*. After the eventual determination of the brain as the organ most intimately concerned with painful experiences as part of awareness, the topography of pain-pathways still remained a mystery until the early nineteenth century. Keele's historical guide leads us right into the twentieth century and presents us with topical trends of thought. The stimulating—even exciting—ideas of René Leriche have received sympathetic treatment at the hands of the author. We are left, however, with the uncomfortable feeling that many of our newest gods are just as much endowed with feet of clay as in the case of some of the mediaevalists. Dr. Keele has stated in his conclusion: 'The search for the *Sensorium Commune* has commenced again. . . . And it is in the conviction that a re-interpretation of the old ideas in terms of new knowledge constitutes a fruitful form of scientific thought that this attempt to tell the story of the anatomies of pain has been made.'

This interesting monograph can be warmly recommended to medical historians, neurologists, neurophysiologists and philosophers. Excellent bibliographies and indexes add considerably to the value of the book.

MACDONALD CRITCHLEY

The Student Life. The Philosophy of Sir William Osler. Edited by RICHARD E. VERNEY, M.B., F.R.C.P.E., D.R. With Forewords by John Bruce and Alec H. Macklin. Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd., 1957; pp. xiii+214. Frontispiece. 15s.

Selections from the writings of Sir William Osler began to appear during his lifetime, when we had *Aequanimitas* (1905), *An Alabama Student* (1908), and *Counsels and Ideals*, edited by C. N. B. Camac (1905), to be followed by *The Student Life, and Other Essays* (1928); *Aphorisms*, collected by R. B. Bean (1950); and *Selected Writings*, published