

Book Reviews

Clemens von Pirquet, his Life and Work, by RICHARD WAGNER, London, Oxford University Press, 1968, pp. xx, 214, illus., 66s. 6d.

This fascinating biography should be read by every medical practitioner and many scientists. Its appearance is timely, for von Pirquet's pioneer work on allergy (the term he originated) has a bearing on the 'new immunology', including reactions (autoimmunization) involved in transplant surgery. Knowledge of the immune process has indeed progressed a long way. However, it is of some interest that von Pirquet's own studies within the concept of allergy included tuberculosis, diabetes, cirrhosis of the liver, the rheumatic diseases and malignant tumours.

Dr. Wagner, now a Professor of Paediatrics Emeritus at Boston, U.S.A., and von Pirquet's co-worker during his last years (1919–29) at Vienna, has resurrected the fame of this clinician, scientist, administrator, humanitarian and genius (a word frequently used in this book).

In Britain, many of us had performed the tuberculin scratch test which bears von Pirquet's name, although we probably preferred the Mantoux intracutaneous test which replaced it. We had heard about von Pirquet and Schick's pioneer work on serum sickness, accelerated and delayed, and how these workers had shed light on allergic reactions after a wide variety of products, animal and vegetable, toxic and non-toxic. However, we knew nothing about the detailed research, patience and drive which characterized von Pirquet's every activity.

Wagner brings his subject to life. Not only does he present his achievements (including his less-known studies on anthropometrics and nutrition), but he develops and illustrates his own conception of genius, including the forces that drive a man of genius to discovery—and, alas, in von Pirquet's case, to failing creative powers and carefully premeditated suicide, in 1929 at the age of fifty-five!

H. J. PARISH

A Bibliography of Sir Thomas Browne, Kt., M.D., by GEOFFREY KEYNES, Kt. M.D., 2nd ed., rev., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, pp. xv, 293, illus., £7 7s.

The first edition of this important bibliography was published in a limited edition of only 500 copies in 1924 and has long been out-of-print. The long interval between the two editions has seen a greatly increased interest in seventeenth-century bibliography and also, thanks largely to Sir Geoffrey's own editions of Browne's collected works, a greatly-increased interest in Sir Thomas Browne. In consequence it has been possible to add considerably to the text of the first edition as well as to revise some of the information contained there. The basic plan, and the original numbering of the entries has not been changed but the last two sections of the first edition, on the works of Dr. Edward Browne, son of Sir Thomas, and on 'Simon Wilkin, Robert Southey and Sir Thomas Browne' have been omitted. The sections on 'Imitators of *Religio Medici*' and on 'Forerunners and Imitators of Vulgar Errors' have been considerably enlarged.

F. N. L. POYNTER