

Book Reviews

JOSEPH MEITES, BERNARD T. DONOVAN, and SAMUEL M. McCANN (editors), *Pioneers in neuroendocrinology*, volume II, New York and London, Plenum Press, 1978, 8vo, pp. 422, \$39.00.

This series of autobiographies continues with twenty-four further essays. The individuals concerned include the three editors, Roger Guillemin, and Solly Zuckerman. These are the second generation of pioneers, whose contributions began in the 1950s and who are still active today. Each discusses his own work, and together they provide a remarkable survey of about three decades of advances, which include chemotransmitters, hypothalamic releasing factors, anterior pituitary hormones, neuroendocrinal control of reproduction, central nervous system activities and their interaction with endocrine function, and the development of mammary and pituitary tumours. Some may question whether this is true history, but these articles will certainly be the stuff of tomorrow's history. For the time being they will make fascinating and valuable reading for many.

LUIS GARCIA-BALLESTER, GUILLERMO OLAGUE, and MIGUEL CIGES (editors), *Classics in modern otology*, Granada University Press, 1978, 4to, pp. 354, illus., \$18.00.

This anthology results from the collaboration of an oto-rhino-laryngologist and two historians of medicine. The selections are in four sections: 'The position of otology and its changes throughout the nineteenth century'; 'Methods of examination'; 'Middle ear'; 'Inner ear'. There is also an excellent introduction and an explanation of how selections have been made. At the end there are biographical notes on the authors included, and a useful 'Bibliography'. There is, however, no index.

The pieces are in their original languages, English, German, and French being the commonest, in this order. Editorial notes or explanations are virtually absent. All that can be said, therefore, is the usual statement, that it is valuable to have classic papers collected together. However, the linguistic barrier, the lack of elucidatory comments, and the absence of an index are grave deterrents.

E. M. CURLEY, *Descartes against the skeptics*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1978, 8vo, pp. xvii, 242, £9.50.

Professor Curley presents here most of Descartes' philosophical opinions in a lucid style with cogent analysis. He deals in particular with the special problems, such as the dream argument, knowledge of one's own existence and mental states, the circle, the argument for God's existence, and the claim that mind and body are distinct. A knowledge of Descartes' scientific interests and of contemporary skepticism is essential for a full understanding of him. This scholarly work, which contains abundant quotations from and references to the original writings, will prove to be a popular appraisal of a man whose philosophy is not always easy to comprehend yet is essential for anyone dealing with the history of medicine and science in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It deserves a wide readership.