

Book Reviews

between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries and is complementary to a small paperback on the same subject also written by Professor Rothschuh.

The first three chapters are on general aspects of physiology, the remainder covering special topics. There are notes on each chapter, an extensive bibliography, an index of proper names, and a series of pocket biographies arranged in alphabetical order. There are also twelve illustrations.

Professor Rothschuh has tried to relate the contributions of the major discoverers to their historical background and to give new meaning to the interpretation of their various physiological discoveries. A superficial reading is insufficient to determine whether he has succeeded or not. However it would well repay physiologists and others with similar interests to decide this for themselves.

(2) The second book is really a collection of Professor Rothschuh's own articles, gathered together from various leading journals, and united under the title 'The Rise of Physiology', a task which the author had long wished to undertake.

In the first contribution he asks the vital question—what is important and meaningful in the history of science? This is followed by a discussion on ideas and methods and their significance for physiology and the influence of this on the development of science. The achievements of Fernel, Harvey, Riolan, Schlegel and Descartes are then detailed in relation to these themes. The final three chapters deal with the role of the *spiritus animalis*, the notion of animal electricity and the origins of nineteenth-century physiological thinking.

In addition to fifteen illustrations, there is an index of proper names and each chapter ends with notes and references. This is indeed a well-produced paperback but the print is small and closely set and this makes reading and concentration difficult.

I. M. LIBRACH

Karl Ernst von Baer, 1792-1896. Sein Leben und sein Werk, by BORIS EVGEN'EVICRAIKOV, (Acta Historica Leopoldina, Nr. 5), Leipzig, J. A. Barth, 1968, pp. 516, illus., M.DN 68.—

'It is sheer superstition to imagine that a scientist can *explain* any phenomenon' (p. 79). These are the words of Karl Ernst von Baer, one of the most important biologists of the nineteenth century. This insight did not prevent him from putting forth the most daring hypotheses and abandoning them when found faulty. With his *De ovi mammalium et hominis genesi* of 1827 he became the founder of modern embryology. As an early evolutionist Baer was a precursor of Darwin. He was also an anthropologist and naturalist and travelled as an explorer in Russia, Finland and the Arctic region.

Baer was born in Estonia and lived and taught during the latter half of his life in St. Petersburg. The present extensive biography based on manuscript material in Estonian archives, apart from Baer's published autobiography, was first published by Raikov in Russian in 1961. But as Baer wrote his works in Latin and German it is fitting that this biography was first of all translated into German in the present form by H. von Knorre and was thus made available to a wider circle of readers. A translation into English would be justified, especially if combined with a translation of the more important works of Baer himself.

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