

Book Reviews

and short-sighted policies in the management of both human and ecological resources, leading to high and irretrievable losses in both, and a consequent decline in her fortunes in the West Indies. It provides fascinating and almost obligatory reading for those interested in medicine and West Indian history.

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JOHN D. FRENCH, DONALD B. LINDSLEY, and H. W. MAGOUN, *An American contribution to neuroscience: the Brain Research Institute, UCLA, 1959–1984*, Los Angeles, University of California Brain Research Institute: UCLA Publication Service Department, 1984, 8vo, pp. vii, 325, illus., \$37.50.

California is the home of many remarkable institutions, and after only twenty-five years in existence the Brain Research Institute of the University of California at Los Angeles qualifies for this epithet. To relate early in its career the way in which it was created, how it has developed, and its multifarious activities, together with accounts of its founders (three of whom are the authors of this admirable survey) and of its staff and their research demonstrates commendable enlightenment. Admittedly, historical perspective is hereby to some extent sacrificed, but, on the other hand, personal aspects of plans, negotiations, research, and aspirations can be recorded by those who have been closely involved with the early years of a thriving centre of excellence. Historians of the future will welcome the details and the intimate biographical sketches, material that may not be available for future commendatory volumes. The wide range of neuroscientific researches carried out at the Institute is especially noteworthy and will be reviewed by others. However, amongst them is a Neuroscience History Program under the guidance of Dr Louise H. Marshall, which is devoted to the history of the neurosciences in America. Its achievements, together with those at UCLA in medical history before the BRI was established and due to the enthusiasm and scholarship of Professors Magoun and C.D. O'Malley, Dr M.A.B. Brazier, and others are impressive.

It is of interest to note that the only other comparable enterprise was not begun until 1984, due in this case to the inspiration and efforts of Oxford's Waynflete Professor of Physiology, Colin Bakemore. As far as the history of the neurosciences is concerned, our American colleagues have provided us with a stimulating challenge.

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JAMES THOMAS FLEXNER, *An American saga: the story of Helen Thomas and Simon Flexner*, Boston and Toronto, Little, Brown, 1984, 8vo, pp. xviii, 494, illus., \$24.95.

This volume is both less and more than the biography that Simon Flexner wanted his son James to write. It is the story of the lives of Simon Flexner, founding director of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research and later doyen of medical science in the United States, and Helen Thomas up to the time they married in 1903. It is also the history of two vastly different families, and what the author sees as the quintessential Americanism of their union. Simon was born in Kentucky to poor German Jewish immigrants, who were less than enthusiastic when in 1890 their son went to Baltimore for the medical training he needed to convert the family's drugstore in Louisville into a pathological laboratory. Helen was a descendant of Maryland's first European settlers, and grew up in an aristocratic Quaker family in which feminism, idealism, and religious fervour were dominant themes. The connecting link was the Johns Hopkins University, where Simon pursued pathology at the medical school that Helen's father helped establish.

Digressive, anecdotal, and sometimes very speculative, this is not a book written primarily for the professional historian, medical or otherwise. Yet even the confirmed pedant is likely to be satisfied by the study's contribution to medical history. The narrative is based principally