

Book reviews

Tenements of Clay. Medical Biographies of Famous People. By ARNOLD SORSBY. 1974. Pp. 258, figs, bibl. Friedmann, London. (t3.50)

Historical *post mortems* are always compelling. They combine the excitement of a detective story, the crossword puzzle of medical diagnosis on fragmentary evidence, and the fascination of the impact on history of some pathological quirk, with the inevitable afterthought of how different our history might have been if only the bacillus had not struck, or the gene been otherwise directed.

Professor Sorsby gives us an engaging anthology of old but often famous forays into this field, starting with his own erudite and whimsical disclosure of the source of Noah's albinism, and including the famous essay on George III's probable porphyria by Hunter and MacAlpine. The editor has wisely annotated the more obscure and trimmed the more prolix, but even so, many seem tiresomely dated and incomplete.

Thus Sorsby's analysis of the many possible causes of Milton's blindness was written in 1930, and therefore omits Rogers' conclusion, published in 1949, that after all a pituitary tumour was the likeliest cause. Similarly, Chaplin (1913) does not mention Napoleon's alleged pituitary deficiency (and psychopathic overcompensation). Brinch's conclusion that Henry VIII's ailments were probably syphilitic (which dates from 1956) is less acceptable in the light of recent biographies. Robertson's account of Johnson's troubles (published in 1929) could also well be up-dated, and the exercise in phrenology by Sir Arthur Keith (1914) would hardly pass muster today. But the editor clearly does not present these essays in diagnosis as a contemporary appraisal, and there are many masterly contributions that still hold water.

There is no Index, but a short Glossary is provided to help the lay reader. This tells us that the word *amaurosis* is "obsolete", and defines a *seton* as "a cutting instrument", and *usquebagh* (which, as Scots at any rate will all know, means whisky) as "an obsolete medicament".

P. D. TREVOR-ROPER

Fluorescein Microangiography of the Ocular Fundus. By K. SHIMIZU. 1974. Pp. 155, 136 figs, bibl. Thieme, Stuttgart (Igaku Shoin, Tokyo). (110 DM)

This beautifully produced atlas, printed in Japan, is intended, says the author, to supplement the previous atlas by Shikano and Shimizu. Using a "microangiographic approach", the aim is to seek a closer correlation between fluorescein angiography and "the vast past treasure of histopathological studies".

The book is essentially an atlas with commentary; the illustrations are excellent, occasionally superb, and set a standard in angiographic practice to which many will aspire. It is a personal atlas, limited to the author's own observations, and the subject matter falls into two categories, basic concepts and specific diseases. Chapters 1, 3, and 4 deal with the radial peripapillary capillaries, dynamics of retinal and choroidal circulation, and fluorescence of the optic disc. Chapters 2, 5, and 6 deal with occlusive retinal angiopathies, some intraocular inflammations, and idiopathic detachment of the retina.

This succinct statement of the author's views is welcome, especially as it is supported by a select bibliography under broad subject headings. His authoritative exposition of the angiographic and clinical presentation of Harada's and Behçet's diseases is particularly helpful to Western ophthalmologists. It is in dealing with the more basic matters, however, that the constraints of this atlas are apparent; the lack of a full review of the literature limits the contribution on the dynamics of retinal circulation to the presentation of personal observations and deductions, which remain largely unorientated.

Production of an English text in Japan must pose serious problems; many awkward turns of phrase together with occasional typographical errors remain witness to this difficulty. The book, however, is to be commended to all clinical ophthalmologists interested in fluorescein angiography as a valuable personal contribution by Dr Shimizu.

D. W. HILL

Notes

International Symposium in Bio-engineering in Ophthalmology

Haifa, Israel, 20 to 23 May, 1975

This symposium will be held in the Dan Carmel Hotel, Haifa, Israel. The main topics will be lasers in ophthalmology, ultrasound, computers in ophthalmology, holography

in ophthalmology, and new methods of tonometry. Free papers are also invited. For further information write to Dr S. W. Hyams, c/o Kenes, P.O.B. 16271, Tel Aviv, Israel.