

### Our Bookshelf.

*The Further Studies on Decrementless Conduction.* By Prof. Genichi Kato. Pp. vii+163+7 plates+88 figures. (Hongo, Tokyo: Nankōdō, 1926.) n.p.

In this second monograph Prof. Kato describes further numerous experiments which he and twenty collaborators at Keio University have carried out on the passage of the impulse in narcotised nerve. An abundance of evidence is adduced to support the now well-known theory that there occurs no gradual decrement of the nerve impulse in its passage through a narcotised region of nerve, but rather diminution to a steady level, as soon as the fully narcotised region is gained. Owing to diffusion at the border of the narcotising chamber, the nerve at that place must needs show a decreasing depth of narcosis at the outer part. This region (the 'limit length') is 6 mm. long and can be accurately defined by mechanical stimulation. Electrical stimulation is attended by the pitfall of 'escape of current,' which, the author maintains, has not been avoided by previous workers. Crushing the nerve is not a proper control of 'escape of current.' 'Escape' or 'spreading' must be differentiated into 'external spreading' along the surface of the nerve (for some 2 mm.) and 'internal spreading' among or within the nerve fibres. This latter, which may amount to some 25 mm., is stopped and therefore not controlled by nerve-crushing. It is estimated in the present series of experiments by determining the apparent diminution of the latent period of the muscle twitch on a smoked record as the stimuli are made stronger and the effective kathode thereby approaches the muscle. This method, though accurate enough, might have been subordinated to one of the elegant and precise electrical methods which are now in vogue for observing nervous phenomena. In most experiments the nerve-muscle preparation of the large Japanese toad has been used. From the few with frog-nerve, there is some evidence that in this tissue the spread of current occurs less readily.

Later chapters describe decrementless conduction in narcotised regions of the vagus and sympathetic trunks and in narcotised muscle—skeletal and cardiac. Experiments have also been made bearing on the relative refractory phase of nerve-fibres. Since the existence of decrement is so much in doubt, the conditions during that phase have had to be investigated from the new point of view. It seems probable that the principle of the all-or-none response is true for the relative refractory phase.

A further communication is promised which, if it is as provocative of thought as the present monograph, will be most welcome to physiologists.

*Francis Jenkinson, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and University Librarian: a Memoir.* By H. F. Stewart. Pp. viii+152+6 plates. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1926.) 10s. 6d. net.

BIOGRAPHIES of men of renown and national heroes—naval, military, and political—are necessary for the due appraisal by the historian, not merely of the men themselves but also of the times in which they lived.

Of greater personal interest are the lives of men of talent, fulfilling faithfully and unostentatiously their daily round, raising their everyday duties to a high level by infusing them with conscientiousness and energy.

Such records are, to most of us, of greater value because they set an example and a standard to which the average can strive to attain. In his memoir of Francis Jenkinson, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and for more than thirty years University librarian, Mr. H. F. Stewart brings clearly before us the character, as revealed by his daily acts, of one of the most lovable of men. We see Francis Jenkinson as a man of many talents, as a naturalist, a lover of music, and, greatest of all, as a bibliographer and a book-lover. The work he accomplished was little short of marvellous when we know that he rarely felt in perfect health. Though not successful in winning any of the great University prizes, he took as high a place as his limited physical capacity would permit, and was consequently a marked man from the first, and he found his true *métier* as a bibliographer. Succeeding Henry Bradshaw, with whom he had previously been associated and whose methods he whole-heartedly admired, he maintained as librarian the high standard of scholarship exhibited by his predecessor, and carried on in the same spirit the enrichment of the library which was under his care.

The author has related the main events of Jenkinson's official life in a most entertaining book, not over-weighted, as many biographies are, with insignificant detail. His subject's efforts, which were largely instrumental in winning the battle of the Copyright Bill and in establishing the unique War Collection, are vividly narrated. Other chapters tell us of his hobbies and recreations—entomology, ornithology, music, gardening—so that we have presented to us an engaging picture of the man as he was and as he will live in the memory of his many friends. The last lines of J. D. Duff's inscription in the ante-chapel of Trinity College admirably sum up his nature:

"Naturam musicam libros  
Sed magis homines homo amavit."

His portrait, painted by Sargent in 1915, excellently reproduced here, forms a fitting frontispiece to the memoir, the writing of which has clearly been a *πόνος ἄπρονος*.

H. H. S.

*The Migration of Symbols: and their Relations to Beliefs and Customs.* By Donald A. Mackenzie. (The History of Civilization Series.) Pp. xvi+219+16 plates. (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926.) 12s. 6d. net.

MR. MACKENZIE deals here with four symbols or groups of symbols—the swastika, the spiral, ear symbols and tree symbols—and the religious beliefs associated with them. As a devoted adherent of the 'diffusionist' school, he sees in each the manifestation of an idea or complex of ideas, which, notwithstanding certain local variations in detail, on the whole is universal and derivative from a common origin. The swastika