

obtained. This excellent book provides the essential background training and anyone contemplating the use of polarography for research or analysis would be well advised to read it and work through some of the experiments beforehand.

B. FLEET

ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENTISTS

A Biographical Dictionary of Scientists

Edited by Trevor I. Williams, assisted by Sonia Withers. Pp. xi+592. (Black: London, January 1969.) 100s.

THERE can be few tasks more riddled with dilemmas than the compilation of a dictionary of scientists which aims to be both comprehensive and yet free of the scourge of perpetual digression. That the *Biographical Dictionary of Scientists* manages to achieve a healthy synthesis of these two ends owes as much to the fact that the contributors have adhered consistently to a prescribed formula for the inclusion of individual scientists as to their actual criterion for such inclusions.

Who can fairly be described as a scientist? What aspects of a scientist's life demand inclusion in a book which sets out to allot one and a half pages to such a dramatic and vital life as that of Einstein, or a mere one page to the pioneering spirit embodied in the life of Ehrlich? Should a person who dabbled in science but whose main prowess was exhibited in some other field of endeavour be included to the exclusion of some slightly more science-bent if less illustrious individual? And if so, should their lives be described in a depth appropriate to their overall fame or to their achievements in science?

The editor has attempted to resolve these questions by selecting one of the many arbitrary but sensible options open to him, although questionably the most logical of the options.

The subject matter embraced by the heading "Science" has been chosen to include engineering, agriculture, medicine and mathematics as well as the conventional science subjects. It is difficult to quibble with this. Where the editor treads on slightly softer ground is in allowing persons like Leonardo da Vinci to claim as much space as some of the giants of the science world, although many people will no doubt excuse this on the grounds of the intrinsic interest of such a unique figure.

The biographies are focused around the scientific achievements of the subjects, with excursions into family or political activities and educational background. The most important dates, discoveries, theories or inventions of each scientist are covered in a style which is as objective as can reasonably be expected in any biography, and, by and large, the information given is both interesting and relevant. Technical language has successfully been avoided in all but the most necessary places.

Considerable pains have been taken to set up a system of references which an enthusiast can pursue should he so wish, and cross-references abound between scientists whose work or lives overlap. An appendix has been added which lists more than 700 scientists who have not been given individual mention but whose names occur in the biographies of those who have.

The dictionary has been compiled by fifty contributors, each an expert in his own subject. There do not appear to be any serious omissions from the list of entries, although the choice of which middle ranking scientists ought to have been included is bound to be a question of opinion.

The philosophical and engineering fringes of science seem to be those most open to argument. That Descartes should be given full honours is beyond dispute, but whether someone like Locke, whose flirtation with science was very peripheral, or Heathcote, whose inventions require some imagination to allow him to be termed a scientist, should be given coverage is open to serious doubt.

The biographies are not without their lighter moments, which is all to the good, but there are some anomalies in this regard. Why Lindemann's tennis ability should take precedence over Einstein's musical skill is a matter of conjecture. In general, however, this book should be a useful addition to the shelves of any scientist, and could certainly make for a stimulating "thumbing through" by many people whose prime interest is outside the scientific orbit.

ANDREW MILLINGTON

Correspondence

Medical Teachers' Pay

STR.—The recent report by the Prices and Incomes Board dated December 1968 on the pay of university teachers recommended that medical teachers with consultant contracts should be paid the same salary as their National Health Service consultants. Since this report was published there has been considerable discussion about the method of assimilation on to the new scales.

The first instruction to the universities by the UGC was that the medical teacher should be assimilated on to the nearest point on the NHS scale except where this was less than his current salary, in which case he would retain his present salary until the next increment was due.

Following further consideration of this problem, which has included consultation with the Prices and Incomes Board, the UGC has now issued a modified instruction to the universities which states that medical teachers should be assimilated to the next higher point on the NHS consultant scale in relation to the salary in payment on October 1, 1968, except that, where there is a point on the NHS scale exactly equivalent to the salary in payment, assimilation should be to that point. These proposals create the following grave defects.

(1) They do not offer even apparent parity of salary between NHS and university except for newly appointed staff and those with less than one year's service. The maximum disparity arises in the case of a senior lecturer with nine years' service, who is paid £945 less than an NHS consultant of similar service. (2) The increases are inequitable, ranging from 16 per cent for some staff to nil for others. (3) The method of assimilation disrupts the existing salary structure for staff with less than four years' service, who will all receive the same salary as newly appointed staff. (4) The method of assimilation is unprecedented, being totally dissimilar to the previous method adopted when a similar situation arose at the assimilation of colleges of advanced technology into universities. The new proposals are unique in that they discriminate against staff already in post.

The repercussions of these proposed salaries can only be the subject of conjecture, but the following points seem worth emphasizing. (a) True parity of salary between NHS and university will effectively be postponed for many years because the starting salary for newly appointed staff will tend to be restricted by the salary structure of those already in post. (b) The proposals will alienate the goodwill of medical teachers throughout the country who will continue to feel that there is a failure to appreciate the injustice they have experienced for many years past. They feel that there is now an excellent opportunity to rectify a long standing anomaly which has hindered the recruitment of medical teachers and has encouraged emigration.

We are convinced that the only equitable method of assimilation is to apply the principle of parity to every