

Living history of science

Pioneers in Neuroendocrinology. (Perspectives in Neuroendocrine Research, Vol. 1.) Edited by Joseph Meites, Bernard T. Donovan and Samuel M. McCann. Pp. viii+327. (Plenum: New York and London, 1975.) \$27.

THE majority of the scientists that have ever lived are alive at the present time. Thus it is possible for followers of the ever-growing subject of the History of Science to actually discourse with the people who made this history: they have the opportunity to examine at first hand the politics, philosophy, and circumstances that resulted in the scientific progress that has been made.

The subject of Neuroendocrinology—the study of the effects of the nervous system on the release of hormones, as well as the study of the effects of hormones on the nervous system—is a particularly young discipline, having only evolved since the period between the two world wars. Thus Joe Meites, Bernard Donovan and 'Don' McCann (themselves pioneers in this field) have been able to seize successfully the opportunity to call on 21 neuroendocrine pioneers "to write a personal, and even idiosyncratic, account" of the background behind the major contributions that each felt he or she had made to this subject. The editors have indeed extracted idiosyncratic accounts from their authors, and each chapter can very much be considered to reflect the character of the respective contributor. Whereas some authors, therefore, have used their publications as mileposts in the passage of time, others have given only a very technical and clinical survey of their research careers, without reference to other events occurring at the time, either in the scientific world, or in the world at large (such reference, if included, being of the greatest value and interest to the historian and to the lay-reader).

There are three chapters that I should particularly like to single out—those by the late Hans Heller, by Dora Jacobsohn, and by Dorothy Price—in that not only do they excel in the good qualities described above, but they also reflect the charm and humility of their respective authors.

It is regrettable that in the present volume two of the chapters are of a similar nature to the respective chapters in a comparable volume, *The Neurosciences: Paths of Discovery* (MIT Press, Boston). This book has, however, already met sufficient acclaim in America that the editors are presently commissioning writers for a second volume. That there should be so many pioneers available, and willing, to write



Hunting Nubian ibex (*Capra nubiana*) in the Red Sea Hills of the Sudan. Nubian ibex have long, slender, knotted horns, gracefully curved. Among males, 42-inch trophies are not uncommon, and the new world record (shown above) measures 54.5 inches. Taken from *African Hunter*. By James Mellon. Pp. xx+522. (Cassell: London, June, 1976.) £15.00.

presumably indicates that each and every scientist is a pioneer in his or her own way: the willingness, as pointed out by M. C. Shelesnyak, derives, at least in part, from the scientist "seeking self-satisfaction and nurturing (his) ego".

Although I would recommend that anyone involved in endocrine or physiological research should read this book, since they will do so with interest, I feel that the price is such that few will be able to afford to buy it. I fear, too, that this book is not sufficiently 'applied' for most science libraries to purchase, unless, that is, they have a shelf principally intended for reference by after-dinner speakers.

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Climate and man

Climate and the Environment: The Atmospheric Impact on Man. (Environmental Studies.) By John F. Griffiths. Pp. vii+148. (Elek: London, May 1976.) £2.95.

INTENDED for "students of geography and environmental studies at undergraduate and pre-university level" this book is a useful quick guide to the relationship between the workings of the atmosphere and the activities of man, without anything like the in-depth treatment of M. I. Budyko's classic work *Climate and Life* (Academic: New York and London,

1974; for review, see *Nature*, 251, 362). The comparison is a natural one, since Griffiths approaches his subject through the energy budget-heat balance approach, drawing to some extent on the work of the Voeikov Geophysical Observatory, where Budyko was until recently Director. He also draws on the work of many other climatologists, as is usual in a book of this kind, but with comprehensive references to the original sources at the end of each chapter—a rarer, but welcome, practice for a text at this level.

There are many clear and useful illustrations, again culled from a variety of published works, and the text is well suited to the intended readership, with some of the mathematical details contained in appendices, again conveniently at the end of the appropriate chapters. The success of the author in reaching his planned market does, however, limit the usefulness of the book to anyone with a more advanced knowledge of the physical sciences who might have become interested in the subject through the continuing debate about the impact of climatic change on man, and the impact of man on climatic change. In the specified teaching context this book is likely to prove invaluable and is strongly recommended; at the next step up the academic ladder, however, Budyko's book remains the essential introduction to the subject. **John Gribbin**

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