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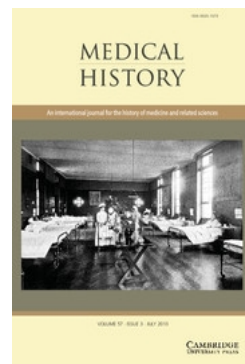
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**Elin L Wolfe, A Clifford Barger and Saul Benison, Walter B. Cannon. Volume 2: *Science and society*, Boston Medical Library in the Francis A Countway Library of Medicine, 2000, pp. x, 644, illus., £19.95 (hardback 0-674-00251-2). Distributed by Harvard University Press.**

Christopher Lawrence

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## Book Reviews

recognized method of taking notes from the distinguished Professor of Physiology was to follow in his manual and cross out whatever he did not say.") By the early twentieth century, the pre-clinical school at Cambridge occupied a position of national prominence, enjoying funding, patronage, and prizes.

As well, an ambitious new generation of medical faculty sought to establish a complete clinical school at Cambridge, to stem the migration to London. In 1884, a series of clinical lectureships were established in seeming fulfilment of this ambition. But the clinical school never prospered and, from the turn of the century, clinical posts were left vacant or abolished altogether. The clinicians could not get a proper foothold in the hospital, which was run by charitable laymen. Therefore, leading British clinicians refused Cambridge appointments. The very success of the pre-clinical school also hindered the development of the clinical school. The scientists waged a successful battle for autonomy and control of the curriculum, blocking the clinicians' ambitions. In 1884, when the two schools supported rival candidates for the chair of pathology, the scientists won, ensuring that this strategic discipline remained in the hands of a physiological pathologist. Even after clinical research became established in the London teaching hospitals, Cambridge clinicians were too weak to introduce it on the Cam. The account breaks off in 1940 when the Regius Professor of Physic, John Ryle, quit in disgust over the rejection of his plans for a clinical research school.

Weatherall draws on recent scholarship which, by revealing struggles between clinicians and scientists to control medical practice, tempers traditional accounts of the triumphant march of medical science. Weatherall, however, largely ignores practice and focuses on University administration, understanding administration as the arena for formal confrontation over the control and meaning of the curriculum. This

approach may exaggerate the importance of intention and agency among the faculty waging their administrative battles.

Weatherall notes that the shortage of bodies was one practical restraint upon expansion in the early years; did laboratory or clinical or examination practices impose others in later years? As a contested site, pathology gets some attention, but other straightforwardly medical or scientific fields such as midwifery do not. The reader is left to wonder about the extent to which these other fields were organized around administrative, or pedagogical, or research agendas. This caveat aside, Weatherall's lively and well-written account makes an important contribution to the history of medical education in Britain.

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**Elin L Wolfe, A Clifford Barger and Saul Benison, Walter B. Cannon.** Volume 2: *Science and society*, Boston Medical Library in the Francis A Countway Library of Medicine, 2000, pp. x, 644, illus., £19.95 (hardback 0-674-00251-2). Distributed by Harvard University Press.

The authors of this, the second volume of a biography of the distinguished Harvard physiologist Walter Cannon, take no prisoners. They begin where they left off, so anyone who has not read volume one (published by the Belknap Press in almost identical format in 1987) and knows nothing of Cannon begins in the dark. This is true in a second sense for it opens with the First World War and Cannon working on shock in his own laboratory. In 1917 after the Americans entered the war, Cannon went to France where he continued to work on the problem. Cannon considered shock was caused by acidosis, the loss of the alkaline buffering power of

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the blood (the blood does not, however, in the authors' words become "acidic" p. 12), a position he reluctantly renounced. The chapters on the war, like every other one in this book, are wonderfully rich. The Cannon archives have permitted the authors to construct the man's life and work in enviable detail. The tiniest anecdotes are so telling. Leaving for the war, Cannon revealed "I made a horrible mistake this noon . . . in the presence of others I called Major Cushing, Harvey, I will never do that again" (p. 7). Chronicling the war years, the authors trace Cannon's various postings in France and catalogue him cementing alliances with old and new friends: T R Elliot, Joseph Barcroft, Walter Fletcher, J S Haldane (but never Lord Haldane, only his brother made it to the upper house). This book is a must for anyone working on science in Europe; it is not just an American story.

As well written as the first volume and having only a couple of minor blemishes in over 600 pages, this volume is the more fascinating of the two. This is so because much of Cannon's mature physiological theorizing was done in the inter-war years, because he was such a prominent international figure, and because the political crises of these years drew out Cannon's own political views. How far all these were related the authors do not speculate any further than Cannon himself did. The inter-war years saw Cannon develop his theory of homeostasis, the idea of the integration of the various bodily systems conserving a harmonious status quo. It was this that Cannon was later to suggest might be applicable to the understanding of societies. Whether, long before he expressed the latter view, Cannon at some level thought about American society in the same way as he thought about the body is left by the authors to the reader's imagination.

The inter-war years saw Cannon immensely active at Harvard and on the international scientific scene. He was

endlessly in demand by committees, though far from being a yes man. He was diplomatic even when forceful in, for example, his defence of pure laboratory sciences over those who perpetrated the "grave error" of thinking laboratory work should be done only to solve "practical problems" (p. 69). Cannon's life was not just spent in the lab and on committees; he had a home life. This latter is narrated in its happy detail too, including the fact that Mrs Cannon (Cornelia) after raising the children became a successful novelist. Perhaps the most fascinating chapters in this book are those that throw light on sections of the American population's insular, anti-Semitic and xenophobic mentality in the inter-war years. Cannon by any stretch of the imagination was a political moderate, most often voting Republican. He was also warm-hearted by nature. The plight of Republican refugees from the Spanish Civil War and many Russian scientists under Stalin generated his compassion and much more. He worked tirelessly for the relief of both groups. For his pains he was regarded by some as a communist sympathizer. This is a major biography of a major figure. The authors have done him proud.

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**Michael French and Jim Phillips, *Cheated not poisoned? Food regulation in the United Kingdom, 1875–1938*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2000, pp. vii, 213, £40.00 (hardback 0-7190-5605-5).**

The sixteen-volume BSE Enquiry report published in October 2000, followed by the government's response in February 2001, both acknowledged the institutional weakness of the state in failing to prevent