

## Books received

*Psychogeriatrics. An introduction to the psychiatry of old age.* By BRICE PITT. Pp. vii + 183, soft cover. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. £2.25.

*Abdominal Echography. Ultrasound in the diagnosis of abdominal conditions.* By ELLIS BARNETT and PATRICIA MORLEY. Pp. x + 138, illustrated, soft cover. London: Butterworth's. £4.50.

*Guide to Psychiatry.* By MYRE SIM. Third edition, pp. xi + 1223, hard cover. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. £6.00.

*The Epilepsies. Modern diagnosis and treatment.* By J. M. SUTHERLAND, H. TAIT and M. J. EADIE. Second edition, 149 pp., soft cover. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. £2.50.

## Book review

### Larrey: Surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard

By ROBERT G. RICHARDSON. Pp. viii + 266, illustrated. London: John Murray, 1974. £4.50.

The author is to be congratulated for finding as his subject a man of whom it has been said that he holds a place in history as the greatest, the bravest, the most dedicated and the most indefatigable surgeon who ever existed and, certainly for his time, the most brilliant and by far the most advanced in theory and practice. And what a practice, when one considers that he was present at virtually every single battle under Napoleon's personal command, from the first Italian Campaign to Waterloo. He was indeed present at many more battles than any of the twenty-six Marshals of France. Larrey can also rightfully be said to have awakened the conscience of mankind to the inhumanity of war. Before him, casualties had simply been a nuisance on the battlefield. As early as the battle of Valmy in 1792 (his first campaign), inspired by watching the flying Horse Artillery going into action, he invented the flying ambulance which he frequently took

into the thick of the fighting, often amputating, and dressing wounds under fire, ignoring rank and treating the severely wounded first, whether friend or foe.

Dr Richardson's portrait is based largely on Larrey's own letters, journals and notes, including the unpublished collection in the Wellcome Institute. The biography is by a doctor about a surgeon (who, as the book reveals, was also a great physician). It is, therefore, based on medical sources and the theme is essentially medical throughout. But the author must be additionally complimented for his skilful weaving of the medical with the military, political and human aspects of that fabulous and terrible drama known as the Napoleonic Wars. As indicated above, the author deserves the highest praise for a well compiled and beautifully written story to which are added maps and many interesting illustrations. It is likely to appeal equally to doctors, soldiers, historians or any serious reader, who will find that this is the kind of book which it is desperately difficult to close before the last page has been read.

## Erratum

Postgraduate Medical Journal, August 1974. The authors of the article 'The use of dialysis bath fluid as a vehicle for a drug with a narrow therapeutic index—lithium chloride' should have been given as H. F. Oakeley, M.B., M.R.C.P.,

M.R.C.Psych., W. F. Clarke, M.D. and V. Parsons, D.M., F.R.C.P. and not W. F. Oakeley, etc. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.