I dipped into this book, jealously prepared to find fault with it. Alan Emery has already written two books on muscular dystrophy, and this was the book I had meant to write when I retire. I soon stopped dipping and read it through. It has none of the textbook character of his previous writings. It is my book but much better than I would have written. Marcia Emery has added a hugely important dimension in her work on the 19th century history of the subject. Together, their account of Edward Meryon and his contribution at last does justice to the man and goes far to justify the recent efforts in this country to use "Meryon's disease" as a catch-all eponym for all forms of X-linked dystrophic deficiency. Much original work has gone into the biography of Meryon and all libraries of the history and biography of medicine should have this book for this reason if for no other. There is less that is new here about Duchenne, but the authors have done him justice too, and I believe they have got the balance right in their assessment of the contributions of these two men. But surely, I hope, they won't have discovered the running controversy between them, carried out in footnotes, and obscure passages of Duchenne's massive "De l'Electrisation Localisée" in its second and third editions? But yes they have. Or found William Gowers' reference to his information on the later family history of Meryon's first case "the Hon George P"? But yes they had. Or found that among Duchenne's cases (Case CII, De l'Electrisation Localisées, 3rd ed, 1872: 612-15) a mother had affected sons by two fathers thus providing us with retrospective evidence of X linkage? Well, no they hadn't, but it is not such a critical point after all. But not only is the 19th century story wonderfully well told, but is seamlessly continued to the present day (a 1994 reference to "emerin" in Emery-Dreifuss dystrophy being excusably added in proof). Emery's clear but detailed account of the step by step development of our understanding of Duchenne muscular dystrophy (with briefers accounts of other dystrophies) is masterly and full of deep insights about the relative importance of the many men and women who have provided the critical advances or triggered the critical scientific debates. Everyone who has made an important contribution to the history of this disease, including several subscribers to this Journal, will find their name in the author index, and for many of them there is interesting biographical detail. But more importantly than that is the way in which Emery has fully grasped the many stages at which advances in Duchenne muscular dystrophy have reflected or pioneered the progress in genetics and has woven them together to make an important contribution to the history of genetics as a whole. This is a book which geneticists with any hankering after history should own; it deserves to become a collectors' piece. But it also contains enough explanation, without being didactic, to appeal to the much wider readership which it deserves.

DAVID GARDNER-MEDWIN

NOTICE

Gene Therapy of Cancer, AIDS and Genetic Disorders

The International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology will be holding the above symposium on 10-13 April 1996 in Trieste, Italy. For further information contact Ms Elisabetta Lippolis, ICGB, Padriciano 99, 34012 Trieste, Italy. Tel: +39-40-3757332, fax: +39-40-226555.