

### Book Reviews

history, the constant use of 'Willie' in what is after all an historical biography must seem incongruous and jarring. The index might well have been fuller. Did Lane really write 'Eiselberg' (twice on p. 109)?

The author deserves our gratitude for this intimate and colourful story of a great and controversial personality. It is a worthy addition to Livingstone's well-known series of 'Notable Historical Biographies'.

W. R. BETT

*The Psychology of Insanity.* BERNARD HART, M.D., F.R.C.P. London: Cambridge University Press. 5th ed. 1957. Pp. xi+127. 10s. 6d.

Since 1912 when this book was first published it has gone into five editions and been reprinted fifteen times. There has been little alteration over the years, and the text stands today much as it was written in 1912. It is a tribute to Dr. Bernard Hart that his book stands up so well to the present day enormous competition from other popular works on psychiatry. Clear, concise, the book deals with psychological mechanisms and their disturbances in a disarmingly simple way. There is a brief chapter on the history of mental disorder, but it is the book itself which is of historical interest. There are few fields of medicine in which a book written in 1912 and remaining substantially unchanged can be read today in a current edition. Perhaps this is an index either of our lack of progress in psychiatry, or of the undoubted validity of the mental mechanisms so ably described by Dr. Hart. Whatever the case the book is undoubtedly a classic, and will continue to be read for many years to come.

DENIS LEIGH

*The Quicksilver Doctor. The Life and Times of Thomas Dover, Physician and Adventurer.* KENNETH DEWHURST. Bristol: John Wright & Sons Ltd., 1957. Pp. ix+192. Illustrated. 21s.

Thomas Dover is remembered today because a prescription he originally intended to relieve the pain of gout chanced to be a valuable diaphoretic. As such it finds a place even in modern pharmacopoeias, strangely sandwiched between synthetic chemicals.

Dover himself never anticipated that his powder would bring him immortality. The legacy he believed he would leave to medicine was a knowledge of the therapeutic value of crude mercury. This he prescribed in the treatment of intestinal infestation, scrofula, infertility, asthma, syphilis, elephantiasis, scorbutic ulcers, intestinal obstruction and even appendicitis. Little wonder that his contemporaries nicknamed him 'the quicksilver doctor'. A title of which he was very proud.

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Dover was born in Barton-on-the-Heath in the Cotswolds. He graduated as Bachelor of Arts at Oxford in 1684, and then moved to Cambridge, where he became an M.B. in 1687. But he learnt his medicine in London, for after graduation he became an apprentice to the greatest physician of his time—Thomas Sydenham. In Dover's book, *The Ancient Physician's Legacy* published years later, it is easy to trace Sydenham's influence on his young pupil.

From London, Dover returned for a while to his native village as farmer and country physician. Later he set up in practice in Bristol, and was the first physician to St. Peter's Hospital. While in Bristol, Dover became well acquainted with the merchants and captains who thronged the streets of what Defoe called 'the greatest, richest and best port of trade in Great Britain, London only excepted'. He made frequent voyages between Bristol and the West Indies, and it is not therefore surprising, that when a privateering expedition to the South Seas was mooted, Dover was willing to invest over £3,000, and although nearly fifty years old, to sail himself as physician and captain.

Dover played a notable part on the voyage. Landing with a small, armed party on the Island of Juan Fernandez, he found a man, clothed in goatskin, who had been stranded there four years previously. This man, Andrew Selkirk, later became the inspiration behind Defoe's story, *Robinson Crusoe*. Dover and Woodes Rogers, the leader of the expedition, did not always see eye to eye. Indeed one feels much sympathy for Rogers; it could not have been easy to have had a dogmatic amateur captain on the expedition, especially when he was also one of the owners.

The voyage was a complete success. Several valuable ships and cargoes were captured. Unfortunately for those who participated, prolonged legal controversy whittled down the financial gain, and Dover had again to settle down as a physician, this time in London.

Dr. Dewhurst has written the story well. He has a scholar's eye for research as is evidenced by a bibliography of over 160 references. The tale never drags, and occasionally, as in the fight at sea, it thrills.

There are seventeen well-chosen illustrations which add considerably to the interest of the text. But was it necessary in Plate IX to have a negative and a positive print side by side? The volume is well produced and has a full index. Altogether an admirable book to buy and to lend to friends, medical or lay.

JOHN RENDLE-SHORT