

Book Reviews

P. W. J. BARTRIP, *Mirror of medicine: a history of the BMJ*, London, British Medical Journal and Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990, 8vo, pp. xiv, 338, illus., £35.00.

The literature on the history of medical journalism (and it is best on the period before the founding of the *British Medical Journal* in 1840) consists mostly of bibliographical materials, just establishing the record of publishing, or bare-bones records of who did the editing. At best we have a few biographies of editors, such as Squire Sprigge's life of Thomas Wakley. Altogether the literature is remarkably sparse, and what there is tends to chronology and hagiography, not analysis. It may not be too much to say, then, that Bartrip's account of the *BMJ* is the first full-scale history of a modern medical journal as a medical institution written by a professional historian.

Bartrip was able to find and use institutional archives of the British Medical Association as well as such records of the *BMJ* itself as survive, to which he had full access. It is rare to have such materials (none comparable exist, for example, for the *Journal of the American Medical Association*), and the circulation and financial figures that Bartrip has assembled alone would make this book set a standard. But the first half of the narrative still had to be based largely on what appeared in the journal, not archives.

The major important themes of the book are how the institution developed, survived, and prospered; how strong editors—there were only six of them from 1870 to 1990—won their independence and made a strong journal. The BMA until the 1860s was ready to abolish the journal because of costs, but eventually the vigorous editing of Ernest Hart and then advertising revenue brought great prosperity to both the journal and the British Medical Association of which it was the organ.

In his attempt to show that the *BMJ* was a true mirror of medicine, Bartrip chose to emphasize the themes of reform and politics, that is, the social face of the medical profession. There is, for example, a great deal more about the political economy of medicine and the National Health Service than there is about diagnosis and treatment. While Bartrip suggests how editors in the nineteenth century took strong stands in favour of scientific medicine as well as social reform, he opens up rather than answers the question of how in the twentieth century a journal became influential and important in scientific medicine even as it helped shape the health-care delivery service.

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WILLIAM WAUGH, *John Charnley: the man and the hip*, Berlin, Springer, 1990, 8vo, pp. xvi, 268, illus., DM 75.00.

The development of hip-joint replacement surgery ranks high among the surgical advances of the twentieth century. Millions of patients with arthritic hips have benefited from Sir John Charnley's pioneering efforts in research and clinical use of the "total hip joint". This book tells the story of his life which, in essence, connotes the story of the hip-joint replacement operation.

The author William Waugh, an orthopaedic surgeon, historian, and writer, knew Charnley as a personal friend and colleague. Other, coincidental, personal connections appeared as he began his work on this book. For example, Charnley's basic laboratory research skills developed in London while studying with R. J. S. McDowal at King's College. McDowal, the Professor of Physiology, was Waugh's father-in-law. In the end, however, obtaining the materials to write this book meant a thorough analysis of Charnley's publications and exhaustive interviews with family, friends, and medical colleagues. This has resulted in a comprehensive account of Charnley's life and teachings. Charnley comes across as innovative, technically aggressive, and most successful in his approach to hip surgery. The story progresses from his theoretical beginning, to the development of his total-hip replacement operation, and on to the creation of the Centre for Hip Disease at Wrightington Hospital near Manchester.

The other and perhaps greater aspect of his genius revolved around infection control. The hip replacement, a large foreign body, originally created an unacceptable incidence of wound