The present volume also includes a concluding chapter by Dr. Needham which summarizes the influences which have operated in the history of embryology from the speculations of the ancients to the birth of the science of experimental embryology as we know it today. Although the present book is entitled *A History of Embryology* it only brings the story to about 1800. The continuation to the end of the nineteenth century is hinted at as a project for the future.

To have produced a second edition of this well-known book is of course a great service to the history of medicine and biology in general but most readers will regret the rather abrupt ending. It is painfully reminiscent of the familiar phrase 'to be continued in our next', which punctuated the monthly instalments of the riddles of Sherlock Holmes. In what has already been printed we are told a great deal about the speculations of the ancients and of the restricted observations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the story breaks off just as we approach the age of experiment. We are left waiting for the continuation of the exciting story of the consequences of 'seeing what would happen if . . .' and all that developed from this attitude in the nineteenth century.

CUTHBERT DUKES

Medical Museum Technology. J. J. and M. J. EDWARDS. London: Oxford University Press, 1959; pp. 182. Illustrated. 21*s.*

A medical museum is often regarded as rather a dull place in which bottled specimens are kept to be brought out occasionally into the light of day for lectures or examination purposes. But there is no reason why it should be a dull place if modern techniques are used for the mounting and display of what Arthur Keith once described as 'Nature's own original documents'. In a similar way books about museum technology might be expected to be sombre literature dealing mainly with the preservation and mounting of medical curiosities and monstrosities. But here again there is no reason why this should be so and in this book by J. J. and M. J. Edwards we have practical proof that this seemingly unattractive subject may be made of absorbing interest.

The reason why the authors have succeeded in producing a readable book on a technical subject is because of the historical approach they have adopted. The book is divided into three parts dealing successively with museum technique up to the mid-nineteenth century, the discovery of formalin preservation and modern museum techniques. It is a fine example of the way in which 'dry bones' may be restored to life by a spice of history.

CUTHBERT DUKES

Ancient Egyptian and Cnidian Medicine. ROBERT O. STEUER and J. B. de C. M. SAUNDERS. London: Cambridge University Press, 1959; pp. 90. 22*s.* 6*d.*

Ancient Egyptian and Cnidian Medicine sets out to trace the influence of ancient Egyptian medicine on the medical practice of Cnidus, a Greek colony on the coast of Asia Minor: with reference, in particular, to etiological conceptions of disease. One important school of ancient Egyptian medicine held that *WHDW*, an etiological principle involved in putrefaction, was a basic cause of disease. This theory seems to have originated in Egyptian religious notions and to have been supported by observation of the process of mummification, for whilst the embalmer's duty was to prevent putrefaction in the dead body the task of the physician appeared to be that of preventing it in the living body!

This is a short book but a scholarly one and heavily documented. It is an important contribution to the study of the relationship of aetiological conceptions of disease in primitive societies.

CUTHBERT DUKES

A History of Ophthalmology. GEORGE E. ARRINGTON, JR., M.D. New York: M.D. Publication, Inc. 1958; pp. xvii+164. $4.00.

This little book is a philosophical survey of ophthalmology rather than a history of the subject. About a third of the text is devoted to classical antiquity; the middle third to the Renaissance and its aftermath, and the last third to what may be called modern ophthalmology. In the first third the philosophical asides do not crowd out the facts and this is perhaps the best section of the book. In the middle third there is little historical perspective: a whole chapter is devoted to Leonardo da Vinci, whose contributions to optics were only recently discovered, and there is nothing to suggest that they influenced his contemporaries. In the last section, the author is concerned about the contemporary acceleration of ophthalmic technology. An ophthalmological chronology running to 10 pages sets out in parallel columns the master minds in history, the major ophthalmic contributions in their age and the general cultural achievements. In so far as it makes ophthalmology part of the history of civilization, this is a useful thesis.

ARNOLD SORSBY

Medical Terms: Their Origin and Construction. FRANGCON ROBERTS. London: William Heinemann Medical Books Ltd., 3rd Edition, 1959; pp. viii+92. 6*s*.

This book will fascinate anyone interested in medical words. It should be in the hands of every medical student and teacher. The great majority of those studying medicine, whether as medical students, nurses or auxiliaries, come to the subject with no knowledge of the classics. They are therefore compelled to learn, or rather to pick up, a vocabulary which is entirely new to them and which is extremely complex. Under the circumstances it is remarkable how well they succeed. Their task could be made so much easier and their work more interesting if they understood the origin and mode of construction of the words which they read, hear, speak and write.

The value of this book can best be shown by these extracts:

Melancholia is a condition which was originally attributed, as its name implies, to a preponderance of black bile. In the retention of such a word there is no harm; the meaning is clear although we no longer believe in the existence of black bile. To abandon such words, even were this possible, would be to deprive our language of much that is expressive and picturesque.

Because they were empty after death the arteries were originally believed to contain air during life, an error which was corrected by Galen, but persists in the word *artery* (G. arteria; aer, air, tereo, carry).

Gonorrhoea (gone, seed: rheein, flow) perpetuates the view once held that the discharge consists of seminal fluid.

Nausea (naus, ship) in early Greek times meant sea-sickness, but by the time of Hippocrates it had acquired its modern sense.

There are many alterations and additions to this new edition. Notice the price—six shillings only.

WILLIAM BROCKBANK