

Book Reviews

as the book itself. This concludes with the statement that, 'With the clarity of his thought and his fortunate literary style he has created a book which is not only enlightening as a historical document but also a pleasure to read'. It should be added that Dr. King has given us an excellent example of one of the best ways of studying and writing medical history. More than 90 per cent of his references are original texts of the period; he is more concerned with what his subjects thought and wrote than with what later (and particularly modern) commentators think about them. There is scarcely a platitude in the whole volume. The perspective is remarkably faithful. There is valid criticism, no condescension, no empty or conventional praise and no tendency to condemn from our own superior standpoint. Dr. King's work is, in fact, genuine history and genuine medicine, and can be warmly recommended not only to those interested in medical history but to the many who are interested in medical thought and practice today.

F. N. L. POYNTER

The Story Behind the Word: Some Interesting Origins of Medical Terms. HARRY WAIN, M.D. Springfield, Illinois: C. C. Thomas; Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1958; pp. viii, 342. 63s.

Several good books on the origin of medical terms have been published within recent years, but the extent and complexity of the language of medicine are such as to provide ample scope for further research and for differing methods of approach to the subject. Dr. Wain's book gives in alphabetical sequence the origin and history of over five thousand seven hundred medical terms, including the principal eponyms. Many recently coined words are included and the overall coverage is sufficient to make this a most valuable contribution to medical lexicography. Typography and layout are excellent and greatly facilitate quick reference. The explanations are very clear and some of them are little masterpieces of concise exposition. The range of factual information is so great that a full evaluation in this respect must be based on long and regular use. The reviewer has noticed few major errors of fact, and these are longstanding ones which have been perpetuated by almost every existing dictionary of medical terms. The description of Harrison's sulcus, for example, is attributed to Edward Harrison (1766–1838), whereas it has been shown by Naish and Wallis (*Brit. med. J.*, 1948, 1, 541) that the deformity was first described by Edwin Harrison (1789–1845), physician to the St. Marylebone Infirmary, London. Similarly, the description of Hartmann's pouch is credited to the German anatomist and anthropologist Robert Hartmann (1831–93), but it was actually described in 1893 by the famous French surgeon Henri Hartmann (1860–1952), as shown by Davies and Harding (*Lancet*, 1942, 1, 193). It is also interesting to note that Henri Hartmann acknowledged that the structure was described and illustrated by Paul Broca as early as 1850. Broca's name, incidentally, is misspelt 'Brocca' in the main entry under his name in the present work. One or two further misprints have been noticed, e.g. William Bogg Leishman for William Boog Leishman and Edwardo Bassini for Edoardo Bassini. The complexities of British titles present an almost insoluble mystery to American authors, and one is not therefore surprised to find the Hon. Henry Cavendish knighted. On the other hand, a great many knights are deprived of their 'Sirs' and Thomas Bryant is credited (s.v. Ilio-femoral triangle) with one which he did not possess. Sir Charles Bell is described as a physician and John Elliotson

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and Francis Sibson as surgeons. These slips do not detract from the value of a book which represents the result of ten years' painstaking labour. *The Story Behind the Word* can be recommended as a valuable reference book; furthermore, it is a reference book which can be *read*—it would make an admirable bedside book were it not for the fact that it is difficult to put down once one has dipped into it. The publisher's blurb describes it quite correctly as 'a treasure house of linguistic adventure'.

W. J. BISHOP