BOOK REVIEWS


It is now almost 20 years since Miss Rae's 'The Strange Story of Dr. James Barry' first appeared—the first accurate and factual life of Barry to be published.

It has been long out of print and the time is now opportune for a fresh life to be written in the light of more recent research and knowledge. This has been undertaken by Miss June Rose whose book we review.

Miss Rose has proved herself to be the ideal writer to depict the varying fortunes of Barry as she is scholarly, objective, sympathetic and compassionate. Her account is scrupulously fair and she avoids all sensationalism—that bugbear which haunts accounts of Barry—and when she does hazard a summise she gives excellent reasons for so doing.

We see Barry as the champion of the under-dog be he slave, leper or soldier and the possessor of an astonishingly modern outlook on disease and hygiene.

The Author makes a very important point when she emphasises the perpetual strain Barry was under in being a woman in a man's world and yet forever doomed to conceal it. This is the key to Barry's life which was not a happy one.

There is one small point—on page 29 the sentence beginning "Before Barry's time" is best omitted as after all the Author is discussing conditions in the 19th Century and not in the 16th and early 17th Centuries.

The book is well produced and the illustrations are apt and interesting. Some carelessness in their supervision is noted e.g. the portrait shown as Lord Charles Somerset C-in-C S. Africa (circa 1830) is surely not his? Judging by the type of wig and the dress it is almost a 100 years earlier, and the cocked hat (shewn opposite page 113) is NOT that of Barry but of Sir John Hall, nor is its source—the R.A.M.C. Historical Museum acknowledged!

These however are minor points and in nowise detracts from Miss Rose's achievement in producing so vivid and factual a life of Barry. It will remain as the standard work on the subject for many years to come.

As a Service we are deeply in the Author's debt. Her book is deserving of every success and it can be unhesitatingly recommended.

A. MacLENNAN


The authors, three medical laboratory scientists and a consultant microbiologist, have sought to provide a guide for junior technicians in the basic practical aspects of medical laboratory work to complement in-service training and to augment the theoretical instruction given on courses for Ordinary National Certificate in Medical Laboratory Science.

Sections are devoted to each of the major branches of pathology with notes on safety, basic techniques and instrumentation. A commendable balance between breadth and depth in the subject has been achieved in this attempt to cover so wide a field in a single compact volume.

Minor criticisms can be made, for example; the use of non-SI units in the haematology section, Giardia 'cyst' under the heading 'ova' and the omission of malarial parasites in the parasitology chapter. However, this well-produced, attractive and competitively-priced book can be recommended for all junior medical laboratory scientists.

D. E. WARREN


This paperback volume contains articles selected from the series originally published in the B.M.J. between 1973 and 1975. Some may dispute the Editor's statement that "... it has become possible to review the spectrum of treatments available for any one condition with the knowledge that the assessment is likely to remain valid for several years ". Drugs continue to come onto the market with a rapidity sufficient to cast some doubt on that view.

However, the choice of topics has to some extent made, the Editor's contention self-fulfilling. There are chapters on diseases of the skin, blood and neoplastic diseases, psychological medicine, and diseases of the nervous system. That is to say, the field is limited, and we must look, I suppose, to further volumes for articles on subjects such as cardiovascular disease where drug therapy seems more ephemeral. I can find no promise of further volumes but their gestation is implied by the title of the current one: why else give it a number?

The content is, of course, succinct and informative as all readers of the B.M.J. will know, and each article (there are 53 of them) is followed by a small list of important references. The book's merit lies in the assembly between one set of covers of the condensed expertise and experience of a wide range of authors, each an expert in his own field. I would be wrong to give the impression that the articles lay too heavy a stress on drug treatment; rather do they deal with management in its broadest sense, and include indications for surgery and, for example, the indications for therapeutic inactivity (a welcome discovery for one who believes, as I do, that far more damaging errors of commission than errors of omission are perpetrated in the name of medical practice). The book will be useful to general practitioners and to hospital doctors.

D. M. ROBERTS

This book exists as a tribute to the late Dr. J. B. Chatterjea, Professor of Haematology and Director of the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine, who died in February 1972. It purports to provide an international survey of trends within the speciality and to make a significant contribution to the literature on haematology, and it sets out to achieve this by collecting together selected topics covered by distinguished workers throughout the world. Certainly, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, Europe (especially France), Japan and Australia as well as India are well represented among the contributors.

Some of the chapters are very good, as could be predicted from their distinguished authorship, but the quality and relevance of others are questionable. A remarkably prolonged gestation has given some parts of the text a rather dated look and this is not offset by the poor quality paper and print. Editorship, too, appears less than forceful, and it is disconcerting to see, for example, illustrations annotated by words in German (presumably for lack of the editorial will to change them to match the text).

Despite these criticisms, the book does contain very useful reviews of many fascinating growth areas, such as blood coagulation, fibrinolysis, drug reactions and folic acid and vitamin B_12, and will be valuable to the generalist as a source of reference.

D. M. Roberts


This textbook is designed primarily for the medical student, social worker, rather than trained psychiatrists. It covers a wide spectrum of topics and the chapters on psychology, social psychiatry and children give the book a very stable and broad base. It is written with admirable economy and is thoroughly recommended to those in general practice, and all doctors wishing to extend their knowledge of psychiatry.

H. C. Ferguson


It used to be called 'Clay's Public Health Inspectors Handbook' and so named was identifiable as the Inspectors technical journal. Some may view the change of title as ominous, but this merely indicates the winds of change that have been blowing (dare we say howling) through the portals of public health since the publication of the 13th edition in 1972.

Into history goes the name 'Public Health Inspector'—and the 'infant.' Environmental Health Officer carries with him an increased range of duties and responsibilities and the prospect of promotion to Chief Officer level. We have entered the Common Market, reorganised Local Government and seen the appearance of a great new legislation which includes The Control of Pollution Act 1974, the Housing Act 1974 and The Health Safety at Work Act 1974. Edwin Chadwick must be wriggling in his grave!

The 14th edition is a hefty volume of 1020 pages, and its price at £12.50 is also hefty. (It is the writers opinion that in view of the gathering pace of change, the authors should now consider a revised format for the 15th edition, to perhaps a loose-leaf manual which would lend itself to amendment. To combine this with an annual amendment would certainly be a more efficient way of keeping us all up to date. I would imagine that most departments and indeed individuals would not object to paying an annual subscription (tax deductible!) to be kept on the mailing list for amendments). But I digress already. Is the new edition worth the money?—What changes does it incorporate.

Yes, it is worth the money, for Clay's must still rank as the major source of reference for all those who are involved with Environmental Health. For the student and practising Inspector, for the Army Health Specialist, and Consultant alike, this book must be a standard reference, for as far as I know there is no other single modern volume that contains such a wide spectrum of information.

Readers will be pleased to note that the layout has been improved: the original 38 chapters are now re-assembled into six parts which comprise—Administration, Constructional Technology, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Safety, Pollution Control, Food Hygiene and Safety.

The section dealing with Noise has been completely rewritten and chapters covering the following have been revised and extended—Atmospheric Pollution, Offensive Trades, Housing, Occupational Health and Safety, Administration and Office Organisation.

It would not be fitting to conclude such a review without a reminder that Major Henry Clay—the author of the original Handbook—was a very active member of the Instructional staff of the 'Army School of Hygiene'. His photograph still graces the corridor of the School of Army Health.

T. F. Calveley