

Notices

THE following two Officers have recently obtained the D.P.H.

Major W. M. Stewart }
Major D. D. Maitland } January 5, 1950.

Reviews

THE JOURNAL OF DR. JAMES BARRY. By Olgar Racster and Jessica Grove. Bodley Head. Price 15s. net.

This book is dedicated by the authors to Sybil Thorndyke for "her fine impersonation of Dr. James Barry" in their play which was put on at the St. James's Theatre.

In a preface dated 1932, the authors describe how they first, in 1911, became interested in the story by hearing of a local tale that the woods near Camps Bay, a suburb of Cape Town, were haunted by an apparition in Georgian Uniform—Dr. James Barry. Fragments of anecdote were collected, most of it handed down from the narrator's grandparents; little that was factual could be found though research was continued till 1919. The following extract from the Dictionary of National Biography was as illuminating as any:

"Barry, James (1795-1865) Inspector General of the Army Medical Department. A woman who passed through life as a man. Said to have been granddaughter of a Scottish Earl. Served at the Cape and at Malta. Lord Albemarle met her at Cape Town when she was medical adviser to the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, as well as Staff Surgeon." "The most skilful of physicians and the most wayward of men." Died at 14 Margaret Street, London, July 25th, 1865, when official report was sent to Horse Guards that she was a woman. "Motive alleged for disguise—love of an Army Surgeon."

The story concerns a woman of gentle birth who, for reasons unknown, assumed male clothing and studied medicine in Edinburgh University. On qualification she became an Army Surgeon, went to South Africa in 1815 and rose in the Army Medical Department to become the Senior Inspector-General of Hospitals, as she is shown in Hart's Army List of 1865. There is record also of service in St. Helena and Jamaica.

It is a tale of the triumph of will over the handicaps of a frail body, of a skilled and fearless woman doctor who, in the early years of the nineteenth century, competed successfully with men ("as an accoucheur he was unequalled, and as generous as he was skilful"); a story of almost life-long deception as to her sex.

In such circumstances it is understandable that no diary should ever have