ventor of the instrument he must necessarily be entitled to object to having any name attached to it which, in his opinion, is liable to lead to misunderstanding. I can, therefore, assure him that should a further edition of my book be called for, the alteration will certainly be made. In the meantime I feel sure Mr. Priest will agree that the description of the instrument which I have given in the text of my book is in no way misleading.

JOHN W. T. WALSH

QUOTATIONS

RESEARCH IN MEDICAL PRACTICE

RATHER more than a year ago the Ministry of Health submitted to the British Medical Association a scheme for cooperative research by panel doctors. This scheme has now been considered by the Insurance Acts Committee of the association in consultation with representatives of the Ministry of Health, and certain conclusions have been arrived at which are likely to exercise an important influence on the future of research work in general practice. Research work by general practitioners, it is felt, should not be restricted either to panel doctors or to panel patients, but should be open to all medical men who may desire to undertake it. It should be voluntary and it should be unpaid. Moreover, the subject or subjects "should be capable of being dealt with by the individual practitioner in a simple manner." This last recommendation is likely to meet with the approval of all who understand the difficulties attending any research work in general practice; it is, moreover, justified fully by the nature of the information of which the profession stands at present in need. The late Sir James Mackenzie, who was the first man in this country to recognize the necessity of continuous research work in general practice, emphasized again and again the fact that knowledge is still lacking about the most simple of human ailments. He was wont, for example, to insist that the nature of pain and the mechanism of its production are unknown, and to ask how, in these circumstances, physicians could hope to deal successfully with this commonplace symptom. His challenge still stands; but the new proposals suggest that it is about to be taken up in the spirit in which it was delivered.

The British Medical Association takes the view that the organization of the investigations to be carried out should be entrusted to itself, and proposes to make use of its machinery of divisions and branches to facilitate the work. There can be no reasonable objection to that plan provided that care is exercised to prevent research work being reduced to the level of a mere *questionnaire*. True research, as Sir Ronald Ross has so often pointed out, springs from the spirit of curiosity and the spirit of wonder and is, consequently, difficult to organize. Research workers are born, not appointed. Thus it may be hoped that there is room in the new scheme for the encouragement and assistance of individuals or groups of individuals who have, in the vast field of general practice, begun to cultivate plots of their own. Such workers have, in all periods, been the real architects of progress. They submit, as a rule impatiently, to the restrictions of "inquiries" which are addressed to them by others, but they possess always great funds of patience and of self-denial for use in their chosen labors. To discover such workers and to help them is a task of no little difficulty and delicacy, but it is a task well worth carrying out. There is room, indeed, in any liberal scheme of medical research for the individual as well as for the group or team. Information which can be obtained in the form of answers to set questions ranks by common consent lower in point of value than that kind of knowledge which inspiration and devotion are able to win.—*The London Times.*

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Introduction to the History of Science. Volume I, from Homer to Omar Khayyam. By GEORGE SARTON, Associate in the History of Science, Carnegie Institution of Washington. Published for the Carnegie Institution of Washington by The Williams and Wilkins Company, Baltimore, 1927. p. i–xi, 1–839.

THIS large volume is the first of several volumes in preparation which mark the most comprehensive synthesis in the history of science thus far conceived. It registers an epoch in the writing of history. Sarton defines science as "systematized positive knowledge" and to this definition gives a broad interpretation to include not only physical science, mathematics and medicine, but also the early history of philology, for "the discovery of the logical structure of language was as much a scientific discovery as, for example, the discovery of the anatomical structure of the body," also the history of religion, for "until relatively modern times, theology was an intrinsic part of science, and not only that, but, in the opinion of most men, all other sciences were subordinated to it." The clash between Greek ideals and the oriental religions (chiefly Judaism and Christianity) is "one of the greatest intellectual conflicts of history." The author includes also parts of the history of music—"indeed the theory of music was considered a part of mathematics almost until modern times." Some attention is