BOOK REVIEWS

The Editor regrets that the author of Find it in Fowler, which was reviewed in the Spring issue, was not mentioned. The author is Mr. J. Arthur Greenwood.

Brewer's dictionary of phrase and fable. Centenary edition. Revised by Ivor H. Evans. With a frontispiece portrait of Dr. Brewer and a brief memoir by his grandson, Captain P. M. C. Hayman. (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1970, 8½in. x 5½in. xvi, 1,175pp., 60/-.)

Ebenezer Cobham Brewer, LL.D. (1810-97), wrote forty publications, but only one, his famous Dictionary of phrase and fable, has survived in full favour to the present day. It is true, however, that his first book of all, A guide to science (c. 1840) had by 1905 gone through 47 English editions and sold altogether well over half-a-million copies. The popularity of this work brought to its author a vast correspondence with questions on every conceivable subject. He kept those questions together with his answers until they made a huge book. Thus was formed the nucleus of the Dictionary of phrase and fable, first published in 1870.

Despite the preliminary forebodings of the publishers (then known as Messrs. Cassell, Petter & Galpin), the latter work proved highly successful from the start; edition following edition. Even although the last edition (the 11th) had been published only two years ago, the grateful publishers have now produced this fine centenary edition, completely revised and brought up to date by Dr. Ivor Evans. Dr. Brewer's original conception was of a dictionary that would give 'the Derivation, Source, or Origin of Common Phrases, Allusions, and Words that have a Tale to Tell'. This notion has been largely preserved in the latest edition, and in addition the editor has performed some formidable feats of cross-referencing. It is a pity, however, that he did not include an index for the vast number of names of persons and places occurring in the 'tales to tell' and other than those already appearing as keywords in the alphabetically arranged headings. In a dictionary of this description an index is every whit as indispensable as it is in an encyclopedia.

The present editor's influence can best be traced in some of his additional 'phrases' (not a few of quite recent origin); such as Brain Drain; Do-it-yourself; Four-letter Words ('the blunt O.E. words for certain parts and functions of the body . . . '); Kiss me Hardy (under Hardy, with no cross-reference from Kiss); Hippie ('one of the names adopted by Drop-outs of the 1960's of the Beatnik type . . . '); Flower Power (under Power); Mods and Rockers; Camford (with a quotation from Thackeray's Pen-dennis); Oxbridge; Redbrick; Moody and Sankey; South Bank religion ('a journalistic label for the religious activities in the diocese of Southwark . . .').

How thorough and scholarly are the innumerable entries can be seen from the following simple example, taken at random:

**Blimp.** A word originally applied to an observation balloon in World War I. 'Colonel Blimp' was created by David Low, the cartoonist, between the wars, to embody the elderly dyed-in-the-wool Tory, opposing all and any change. A blimp has come to mean an elderly, unprogressive, reactionary 'gentleman' of somewhat limited intelligence.

Under Dean we are reminded that the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, is 'head of the college and also Dean of the cathedral', whereas the Deans of the other colleges are merely the resident dons responsible for undergraduate discipline. This recalls for me the following eighteenth century correspondence: 'The Dean of Oriel presents his compliments to the Dean of Christ Church and requests the pleasure of his company at dinner . . . . ' The latter Dean was incensed and replied: 'Alexander the Great presents his compliments to Alexander the Coppersmith and begs to decline . . . . '

Some of the phrases and fables are classified, as for example: Death from Strange Causes—did you know that Sir Francis Bacon 'died of a cold contracted when stuffing a fowl with snow as an experiment in refrigeration'? Or that Chalchas the soothsayer died of laughter at the thought of having out-lived the predicted hour of his death? Dying Sayings; and Regimental and Divisional Nicknames. Dog indeed has no fewer than 115 entries under the following five subheadings: (1) Dogs in Phrases and Colloquialisms; (2) Dogs of note in the Classics and in Legend [but no mention of Cerberus]; (3) Dogs of noted people and in Literature, etc.; (4) Dogs in Symbolism and Metaphor; (5) Combinations of Dog or Dog's.

Of what use can this massive tome be to the indexer? I'm bursting to tell you (under Burst). First, by consulting its pages the indexer will be able to supplement his knowledge of the Queen's English ('English as it should be spoken . . . '). Secondly, offhand I should say that by-and-large there is no other reference tool containing just this information, or so attractively presented. Thirdly, he will here find an authoritative explanation of all the curious odds and ends he is likely to encounter in the text of any work he is indexing.

At present-day book prices the three pounds that the purchaser is required to fork out for this eleven-hundred page work is not excessive and should not drive him to seek financial accommodation. To anyone tempted to disparage or have a down on the work of the great Dr. Brewer, as revised by Dr. Evans, I can only say, Go to blazes ('Go to Hell . . . ').

G.N.K.
An index to 'Nottingham and its region', etc., by R. A. H. O'Neal and B. M. C. O'Neal for the North Midland Branch of the Library Association: [Derby], 1968.

Nottingham and its region, 1966, produced for the 1966 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, gives an account of the geology, climate, vegetation, fauna, water supply, prehistory, economic development, present-day economic structure, horticulture, extractive industry and many other aspects of Nottingham and the surrounding district, comprising Nottinghamshire and parts of Derbyshire and Lincolnshire. Each of these main subjects is treated in a separate chapter where most of the relevant information will be found.

However, smaller subjects may in their different aspects appear appropriately in more than one article, for instance, lead and lead-mining is treated in the chapters on geology, on evolution of settlement (once in the Roman period and once, much later in the chapter, in the Middle Ages), on extractive industry and on economic development (where also at the end there is a short bibliography on lead-mining); in other words material on lead and lead-mining occurs in four different chapters in six different places. Why such a book was ever published without an index is not for the present reviewer to attempt to guess: perhaps, however, he may permit himself to pause and record his disapproval of such publishing practice before passing on to the pleasanter duty of welcoming the initiative of the North Midland Branch of the Library Association which provided, two years later, a separately published index to the work.

The index is by two librarians who, though not trained indexers, obviously have considerable knowledge of the subject matter and employ a methodical approach. The index, which starts with a note clearly explaining its scope, contains subjects, place-names and personal names in a single alphabetical sequence. The information given is full but not excessive, for example 'Mapperley Hill, weather station'—how often has one wasted time through less specific entries! wanting, say, the weather station one has looked up the bare reference 'Mapperley Hill', only to find that the text deals with, say, the (hypothetical) Roman camp there—and long lists of unspecified page entries, another time-wasting irritant, are carefully avoided. There is, however, a rather daunting string of sub-entries arranged strictly alphabetically (except for one attempt at a subject-arrangement under the sub-entry 'education') under 'Nottingham *', whereas a preliminary grouping of all the sub-entries under broad subjects would have been easier to follow. Still, the layout—two columns sufficiently wide to allow nearly every entry to be completed within the line—is very clear to use, even without such grouping.

Commas between the heading and the references, and stops after the references could have been omitted.

Richard Bancroft.


Bibliographies of bibliography are usually considered works for the specialist and the enthusiast, but Reuben Musiker's survey 'South African Bibliography' is interesting to the general reader as well as being a mine of information for the specialist.

This bibliographical survey with much bibliographical information on the great collectors of South Africana brings life to the subject and shows how unfortunate it is that many bibliographers lack the detailed knowledge of their subjects to be able to follow Reuben Musiker's excellent example.

The work itself is divided into types of material, reference being made to key reports in the text and a full bibliographical entry being given at the foot of the same page. It would have been an advantage if the pagination, or better still, number of entries, were included in the bibliographical description, to distinguish between the small but useful Cape Town University School of Librarianship bibliographies and massive productions from Syracuse University.

The index to this bibliographical survey makes good use of type variety, broad subjects being listed in large capitals, minor subjects in small caps, authors with initial caps and titles in italic. Whilst there is a note that titles are indexed selectively, the basis of the selection is not given and in consequence the user will always be disappointed at not finding in the index every entry he needs for titles mentioned in the book.

There are one or two mistakes, for instance 'BASUTOLAND' but 'Bechuanaland'; 'CARTOGRAPHY 55-57' but 'MAPS 55-56'. A good breakdown is given of broad subject headings and common sense 'see' references are included. It is noted that appropriate alternative headings are given such as 'HIGH COMMISSION TERRITORIES' as well as references to each territory by both their pre- and post-independence names.

Altogether a good index, produced after considerable thought, and well in keeping with the interest and excellence of the work itself.

C. D. Overton.