

EPHEMERIDES

VARIATIONS ON A SINGLE THEME: SYPHILIS

The section “Varia” was published in the first volume (1925) of the recently created “Brazilian Annals of Dermatology and Syphilography” (Anais Brasileiros de Dermatologia e Sifilografia). The first section, titled “Did syphilis exist in Brazil when the country was discovered?”, was written by Eduardo Rabelo. The second, a variation on the same theme titled “About a term in Medicine”, portrayed the relevant and judicious considerations of Dr. João Ribeiro about the origin of the word *syphilis*. The word was created by the imagination of the doctor, naturalist, cosmographer, astronomer, mathematician and poet from Verona named *Hieronymus Fracastorius* or Girolamo Fracastoro (1478 – 1553), who in his (epic) Latin poem in three cantos titled “*Syphilus sive morbi gallici libri três*” explored the French disease. The main character and hero, carrier of the disease, was fictitiously named *Syphilus*. Dr. João Ribeiro concluded that after this poem was written, the term syphilis appeared in several different languages, contrary to the ill-constructed logic supported by some lexicographers about the origin of the word. He concluded by adding that the name of the poet, as well as his creation, remains tied to a simple etymologic memory in the anecdotal history of Medicine.