

Book Reviews

SHEVAWN LYNAM, *Humanity Dick. A biography of Richard Martin, M.P. 1754–1834*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1975, 8vo, pp. xvii, 300, illus., £5.95.

Martin came of an ancient Irish family in Galway that possessed large estates and much prestige. He excelled in debate, for example in the struggle of the Irish Catholics for civil rights, he was an intrepid duellist, an excellent actor, and an astute lawyer who fought for the abolition of the death penalty for forgery. He was a benevolent landlord and so acquired his nickname but in particular he was concerned for the welfare of animals, and his famous reply, "Sir, an ox cannot hold a pistol", epitomizes his defence of them.

During his lifetime the common attitude towards domesticated animals was as it had always been: because they were below man in the hierarchical chain of being, and having no soul or perception they were treated with the neglect and cruelty such creatures deserved. Martin, however, stood out as one who wished to change this attitude, and much of the change that eventually took place resulted from his endeavours. He personally punished all those who ill-treated their beasts, taking the law into his own hands and so earning a good deal of opposition and ridicule. Nevertheless, in 1822 he was successful in steering through Parliament the first bill the prime intention of which was the protection of animals from maltreatment. Out of Martin's efforts and this act grew the Society for the Protection and Care of Animals founded in 1824.

This book is the first biography of Martin. Unfortunately it is defective in many ways and although based on extensive records, no references are given in the text. The historian of medicine and biology will, however, be interested in it as it depicts the changing attitudes of man to his fellow creatures, stemming to some extent from the humanitarianism of the eighteenth century. The subject is also of importance for other related reasons: the overwhelming problem of so-called "vivisection", which is still with us, and the plea of the vegetarian who is opposed to breeding food-producing animals.

ESTHER FISCHER-HOMBERGER, *Geschichte der Medizin* (Heidelberger Taschenbücher, Basistext Medizin), Berlin, Heidelberg and New York, Springer-Verlag, 1975, pp. viii, 213, illus., [no price stated].

'History of medicine without tears' should be the title of this concise history of events, ideas and persons, interspersed with anecdotal material and numerous illustrations. The greater part is told in chronological order while a smaller part deals with the development of single disciplines, both from Antiquity onwards on an international scale. Generalizations would be necessitated by this scope but do not warrant sweeping statements that contradict well-known facts, e.g. on p. 42, "Amongst Oriental borrowings in vocabulary at the time of the Crusades those were excluded which seemed un-Christian because of their luxuriousness, except for the words for *sugar*, *candy* and *sofa*". Old French and Middle High German epics abound with words for jewels, costly clothing materials and spices derived from the Arabic. However, much can be learned even from a little handbook of this kind, and her racy style leaves the reader rarely in doubt about the author's point of view on controversial questions. A bibliography and a name and subject index complete this useful aid for layman and student.