

Book Reviews

F. Fontana but not to those by Richard Brocklesby and F. D. Hérisant. In general it may be said that this book does not adequately cover the early periods or adequately discuss the older drugs. The people who will find it of greatest use are those preparing lectures in clinical pharmacology, students setting out on research into pharmacological problems and historians of medicine interested in the post-1850 period.

M. P. EARLES

XIle Congrès International d'Histoire des Sciences (Paris 1968) Actes, Tome VIII; 'Histoire des Sciences naturelles et de la Biologie', Paris, A. Blanchard, 1971, pp. 228, illus., Fr. 45.

In this well printed and illustrated volume are published forty papers read at the Paris meeting (1968) and devoted to the history of biology and medicine (the latter not mentioned in the title of the book). These are given in alphabetical order of the authors' names. Nine of them (Andreev, Clarke, Goutina, Klein, Levene, Raspadori, Rytel, Tchesnova, Widy-Wirski) deal with medico-historical problems. Most of the articles concern nineteenth- and twentieth-century biology. Some are stimulating and bring new material and ideas, but the drawback of such a publication is that it constitutes a mosaic of facts instead of a consistent corpus discussing and deepening a given question or problem. The time has now come for a suppression of such 'big' congresses and their replacement by Symposia or Colloquia on a restricted theme.

J. THÉODORIDÈS

Irish Peasant Society: Four Historical Essays, by K. H. CONNELL, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, pp. xiii, 167, illus., £1.75.

In this scholarly and entertaining book Professor Connell discusses, using oral and mainly official printed sources, the Irishman's liking for drink and his skill at producing it illicitly; and also examines certain factors that help to explain why Ireland has had a traditionally low illegitimacy rate (lower than Wales, for instance) combined with, since the Famine, an apparent averseness to marriage.

During the 19th century illicit distilling was rampant in Ireland. Not only did it express the peasantry's native genius for flouting authority; on a more practical plane it provided a drink cheaper than 'Parliament whiskey', while at the same time it created work for idle hands and increased the income of peasant, landlord and church alike. It naturally flourished in rural conditions and was able to survive much longer than in urban England where poteen-making (an Irish activity) went on the decline after 1870. The story of how it once prospered is a fascinating one and is told here with great skill and ample documentation.

Ether-drinking, subject of a second essay, was localized to the area in Ulster between Loughs Erne and Neagh. It was indulged in mainly by Catholic small farmers and labourers who, like drug-takers today, sought a cheap and easy passage into fairyland. ('You always heard music and you'd be cocking your ears at it . . . Others would see men climbing up the walls and going through the roof, or coming in . . . down the walls, nice and easy.') Increasingly from about 1850 onwards supplies of ether made their way from Britain into the shops of apothecaries and grocers and were bought in

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twopenny spoonfuls often by people who, carried along by the then powerful temperance movement, had forsworn the more traditional forms of drink. For years the outside world remained ignorant of this social problem and it was not until 1890, word having finally seeped through to Westminster, that ether was scheduled under the 1870 Poisons Act. Other problems have since come to the fore.

Illegitimacy in Catholic Ireland was extremely low throughout the 19th century and remains so today. In two essays (one of them on marriage) Professor Connell demonstrates how this situation comes from a combination of circumstances that is probably unique to Ireland: tight family life, high emigration, national patterns of inheritance, and the church's control over sexual morals. Presenting us with the realities of life in a theocratic state he also makes us realize what a matchless facility the ordinary Irishman has for speaking picturesque English. There is the story, for instance, as told by an aggrieved young man, of how he and his girl friend had once been disturbed by an over-zealous priest who 'came on us as we were walking peacefully on the shore road one night, and if he didn't give up with his umbrella, and give her several licks of it on the head and shoulders.' Shades of Cromwell's Major-generals.

E. GASKELL

The Treatment of Head Injuries in the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648): Joannes Scultetus and his Age, by LOUIS BAKAY, Springfield, Illinois, C. C. Thomas, 1971, pp. xii, 106, illus., \$9.00.

Readers of this book will share Dr. Bakay's gratitude to the Piarist fathers of Budapest who gave him his love of old books and an enviable proficiency in Latin. He has translated the *Armamentarium Chirurgicum* of Joannes Scultetus (1595–1645) from the Frankfurt edition of 1666, the *Tractatus Perutilis et completus de Fractura Cranei* (3rd edition, Venice, 1535) of Berengario da Carpi and a late seventeenth-century edition of *Observationum et Curationum Chirurgicum Centuria* by Fabricius Hildanus. The parts of these works dealing with cranio-cerebral injuries, and particularly the first of them, form the basis of his appraisal of the neurosurgical scene on the battlefields and in the hospitals of this disturbed period of European history and they are enriched with relevant extracts from the experiences of Ambroise Paré. Local colour from the battles (invariably crimson) is supplied by vivid extracts from the account of the battle of Wittstock in Grimmelshausen's *Der Abenteuerliche Simplicissimus* (Mompelgart, 1669)—again translated by the author—with illustrations from woodcuts, fortunately for the squeamish not too well defined, by Jacques Callot (1592–1635).

Separate chapters deal with the original sources and their interesting authors, the history of the war, the soldiers, the surgeons and the medical management. There is much of interest concerning the weapons. The more fortunate soldiers had wheel-lock muskets but there were still some with match-lock firing devices which tragically were liable to ignite the powder pouches on the bandoliers. The slowness of the ball in transit tended to cause a depressed rather than a penetrating wound whereas the bolt from a crossbow could readily puncture a skull. Seemingly less fortunate and more expendable were the pikemen who awaited the charges of the Swedish cavalry.

The surgical instruments were surprisingly modern in design and the treatment in