

Book Reviews

ARTHUR E. IMHOF and ØIVIND LARSEN, *Sozialgeschichte und Medizin. Probleme der quantifizierenden Quellenbearbeitung in der Sozial- und Medizingeschichte*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget (Stuttgart, Fischer Verlag), 1975, 8vo, pp. xi, 322, illus., Nkr. 138.00.

The Scandinavian countries, as is well known, have a remarkable series of population statistics which cannot be rivalled anywhere else in the world. Nowhere is there so much data concerning the ordinary man that leads back into the pre-industrial eighteenth century and beyond. From the purely medical point of view, physicians have been able to investigate the hereditary aspects of a number of diseases, and from the historical aspect a remarkable mass of vital information is available. Thus entire parishes in Sweden and Finland have, from 1749 onwards, registers of monthly totals of births, marriages and deaths, with age, sex, cause of death, etc., given.

The authors of this excellent work, a historian of epidemics and social medicine and a medical demographer, have, therefore, been able to trace epidemics in great detail, demonstrating their relationships to topographical conditions, socio-economic status and to dietary conditions. In addition they have surveyed the diseases of whole communities, and they present their findings both statistically and graphically, showing the fluctuation of infections as biological agents over long periods. To supplement this rich source, Drs. Imhof and Larsen have drawn upon and analysed material from the diaries of physicians, from military, naval and industrial medical reports, from quarantine regulations, and so forth.

In their book a good deal of space is devoted to the presentation of the methods of recording and utilization of the data accumulated, manual, mechanical and electronic. Thus, although the authors' analytical studies relate to specific Scandinavian locations, and therefore to local conditions and specified periods, similar research can be carried out by other workers elsewhere, using their techniques. In order to find a way through their masses of data, which today can be collected by teams and by computers, and to avoid a history divided into many separate and unconnected parts, the authors constructed and developed graphically a series of models and charts. They could relate events to the quality of the harvests, depict morbidity, fatality and mortality, determine the structure of populations and the effect on them of conditions varying from absolute health to death. The text is well documented and there is an excellent bibliography.

This book can be recommended to all medical historians, especially those concerned with demography, epidemiology and the social and economic aspects of medicine over the last two hundred years. It should also be of great interest to physicians and other workers investigating present-day population and epidemiological problems; their modern conclusions are to some extent based on the evidence of the past; such as the authors display here with their combined skills. An English translation would be welcomed.

H. G. LAZELL, *From pills to penicillin. The Beecham story. A personal account*, London, Heinemann, 1975, 8vo, pp. [viii], 208, illus., £4.90.

Mr. Lazell spent his whole life in the pharmaceutical industry (1930–1968), and

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rose from humble beginnings to be Chairman and Chief Executive of Beechams Group Ltd. By training, he was an accountant, qualification in which he secured by the aid of a correspondence course. He tells his story well, and it is of considerable value to the historian to have an account of pharmacy from the commercial point of view, because most histories deal only with the biographical and technical aspects. The author does, however, discuss some of the latter, in particular the 6-APA penicillin, but again the board-room perspective and decision-taking are revealing. He also gives the story of Lucozade, Brylcreem, Phensic, Beechams powders, and other pharmaceutical products with household names.

The book is written in a chatty and absorbing style with no references. It will, however, become part of the bibliography of pharmaceutical, as well as of business, history.

JOSEPH SCHILLER and TETTY SCHILLER, *Henri Dutrochet (Henri du Trochet 1776–1847). Le matérialisme mécaniste et la physiologie générale*, Paris, A. Blanchard, 1975, pp. 229, illus., Fr. 50 (paperback).

Dutrochet was a highly original French biologist who contributed importantly to basic concepts such as osmosis, the cell theory, and to the growing science of microscopy at the beginning of the nineteenth century. His extreme materialism is reflected in this pioneer work in general physiology and it had considerable influence in France and other countries.

The authors first deal with the biography, iconography and the scientific concepts and influence of Dutrochet. Then follows a previously unpublished autobiography and comments by Dutrochet on his own work, paper by paper, and finally thirty-six letters. Thus we now have a much better idea of the man and of his scientific contributions, and Dr. and Mrs. Schiller are to be congratulated on providing such an excellent appraisal of him. Their book is a model of its kind and we need more like it.

LOUIS-VINCENT THOMAS, *Anthropologie de la mort*, Paris, Payot, 1975, 8vo, pp. 540, Fr.99.

Professor Thomas is a sociologist and a founder member of the Société de Thanatologie. His large and scholarly book deals with all aspects of death and is divided into four sections: death in general, that is its physical, biological and social aspects; the experience of death; part and present attitudes to death; death as physical decay in the imagination, thus death and language (*thanato-sémiologie*), death and symbols allaying beliefs and attitudes. In sum it is a detailed and critical comparison between African death, already dealt with by the author in an earlier book, and death in the West. From this it is hoped will arise a better understanding, allowing man, by means of a new humanism, to accept more readily his destiny of death.

The author has documented his text with a profusion of informative footnotes, but in general there tends to be a somewhat uncritical accumulation of data. He does show, however, the increasing interest in death as illustrated by a profusion of studies, which in itself is combating the taboo usually placed on the subject. This book is, therefore, useful because of its encyclopaedic format, but in addition presents a number of stimulating ideas, as well as some that are perhaps ghoulish.