

Book Reviews

historical note to help sort out fact from fiction, the historian will still declare that he can never be sure what is real and what is fabricated. To decide, he must investigate the doubtful, but this, of course, destroys the objective of the book which is to provide entertainment.

LESLIE V. GRINSELL, *Barrow, pyramid and tomb. Ancient burial customs in Egypt, the Mediterranean and the British Isles*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1975, 8vo, pp. 240, illus., £5.75.

The disposal of the dead, although a grisly topic, is one of the most interesting of man's activities, reflecting as it does many basic beliefs of the inhumators and cremators. Mr. Grinsell, who was Curator of archaeology and history at the City Museum and Art Galley, Bristol, has produced an excellent, scholarly work on burial customs which brings together a remarkable amount of information.

In the first part he discusses general topics, such as treatment of the body, dress and personal adornment, grave goods, funerary rituals, and the later history of the tombs including grave robbery. In the second he deals with specific regions, including Egypt, Mycenaean tombs, Etruscan cemeteries, and the British Isles, based on personal visits between 1958 and 1973. An appendix gives useful information for those wishing to visit these sites.

The main criticism of the book is that more could have been said about the underlying ideas and cultures that determined a community's funeral customs, for to the historian of medicine this is an important aspect. Nevertheless, the book provides an authoritative, well-documented and richly illustrated account, and it can be strongly recommended.

NORMAN HOWARD-JONES, *The scientific background of the International Sanitary Conferences 1851-1938*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 1975, 4to, pp. 110, illus., S.Fr.12.00 (paperback).

During 1974 a series of six articles on this topic were published in the *WHO Chronicle* by the author, and they are now collected together and provided with a 'Preface' and 'Index'. The subject has never been dealt with before and Dr. Howard-Jones' book is, therefore, worthy of widespread notice. Moreover, a study of the conferences reveals a number of lessons of vital importance for present-day methods of combating disease. Clearly the author has based his work on very extensive research and includes a number of original contributions to the history of medicine. Thus he gives credit to Filippo Pacini (1812-1883), the discoverer of the corpuscle that carries his name, for his discovery in 1854 of the cholera vibrio thirty years before Koch, and he points out that this seems to be the first incrimination of the pathogen of a disease. The material throughout is well documented and well written, and there are excellent illustrations. This book may, therefore, be strongly recommended as a valuable addition to our knowledge of the history of public health and microbiology.