

Book Reviews

T. H. LLOYD, *The English wool trade in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. xi, 351, £12.50.

Much has been written by economic historians on the wool trade of England, but this book is claimed to be the first comprehensive account of it that covers the whole medieval period. It includes new research as well as synthesizing earlier scholarship, but some selection has been necessary and certain topics such as sheep farming are, therefore, excluded. The main themes concern the production and marketing of wool and its effect upon the economy and politics of various parts of society. The author also deals with the influence of the wool trade on relations with European countries and of the export of wool on England's economy. He has produced an important scholarly book which historians of medieval medicine will wish to be aware of. The medical implications of the wool trade would make an interesting study, for they range from the health hazards to which wool handlers are exposed, to the history of clothing and personal hygiene.

RICHARD G. ROBBINS jr., *Famine in Russia 1891–1892. The Imperial Government responds to a crisis*, New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. xiv, 259, illus., \$18.75.

Little has been written about this calamity, which represents a turning-point in Russian history. The period of reaction after the assassination of Alexander II ended and a new era of dissent began. This book is based largely on documents in Soviet archives and it dispels some of the myths about the famine. It concentrates on the government's policy-making and the operation of state institutions, thus offering an insight into their general functioning in the nineteenth century as well as into their attempts to cope with the crisis in hand. Dr. Robbins' study also allows insights into the viability of the old regime itself. It is a work of high scholarship and will be of interest to medical historians as an example of how a country tackled a nutritional disaster, as well as to students of Russian history in general.

CHARLES BELL, *Illustrations of the great operations of surgery, trepan, hernia, amputation, aneurism, and lithotomy*, London, Longman, et al., 1821, 4to, pp. viii, 134, illus., (reprinted by Pinecliffe Medical Publishing Co., Pacific Palisades, Calif., [1976], \$60.00).

Sir Charles Bell (1774–1842) wrote this book as a teaching manual, including in it the results of his extensive surgical experience and his own excellent drawings. Although inferior in the art of surgery to a number of his contemporaries in London and Edinburgh, his book is nevertheless of importance in the history of British surgery. Whether this sumptuous facsimile reproduction deserves the publisher's banner headline, "Relive the dawn of modern surgery!" is, however, another matter.

As is so often the case with this type of prestigious reprint, its elegance much exceeds the historical information provided; this is on a separate promotional sheet but not in the book itself and constitutes a few paragraphs only. For the price asked one might have expected an essay on early nineteenth-century European surgery and Bell's place in it. However the book is no doubt intended for the facsimile collector rather than the serious student of the history of surgery.