

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