

Book Reviews

The Medical and Legal Aspects of Sanitary Reform, by ALEXANDER P. STEWART and EDWARD JENKINS (reprint of 1866 ed., with an introduction by M. W. Flinn), Leicester University Press, 1969, pp. 24, 100, £1.60.

The current interest in matters Victorian has prompted the Victorian Studies Centre of the University of Leicester to publish a series of Victorian classic literature in various fields. This is appropriately called The Victorian Library.

Each volume is reprinted photographically from the first edition where possible and carries an introduction by an authority on the author or subject, together with a bibliographical note.

This book is one of the series and is introduced by M. W. Flinn, Professor of Economic History at Edinburgh. As the blurb aptly puts it, the state of Victorian Public Health is still commonly over-simplified. Despite the amount of legislation, actual achievement was for a long time negligible. In the 1860s this prompted a campaign demanding radical legislative revision. Two of the leaders were a doctor, Alexander P. Stewart M.D., and a barrister, Edward Jenkins.

Their pamphlets published in 1866 in the *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Services* are reproduced herewith together with an additional account of a deputation to the then President of the Privy Council—the Duke of Marlborough.

The excellent preliminary introduction by Professor Flinn emphasizes that the pamphlets were key documents in this process of sanitary reform. The first by Stewart begins with a review of existing legislation and its negligible effect on the prevention of cholera and typhoid fever and the provision of pure water. The work of Chadwick, Simon and Snow is critically examined, especially in relation to policy and decision-making. The poor salaries of Medical Officers of Health is emphasized as well as their neglected role in the development of local health consciousness.

Jenkins then takes up the legal aspects, criticizing the fragmentary character of existing legislation and suggesting that the most important deficiency is the absence of a 'central overlooking power'. All sanitary matters should come within the management of one authority who would have a staff of officers overlooking and directing local authorities and their officials. He also questions the supply of gas and water by private companies. In his final summing up he perceptively states that 'in the administration of laws human, unlike laws divine, diversities of operation are obstructive'. This diversity was emphasized in the deputation to the Duke of Marlborough, who was sympathetic to the views expressed.

The University of Leicester is to be congratulated for its initiative in providing readers with influential Victorian texts that would otherwise be forgotten.

I. M. LIBRACH

BOOKS ALSO RECEIVED

BROZEK, JOSEF, and SIBINGA, MAARTEN, S. (eds.), *Origins of Psychometry: Johan Jacob de Jaeger on Reaction Time and Mental Processes (1865)*, Nieuwkoop, B. De Graaf, 1970, pp. 76 + facsimile, Fl.72.