

Book Reviews

defendant of the Acts: "I am astounded at the audacity of his declaration 'Our profession and our profession alone has a right to dictate . . .' in the matter of the Contagious Diseases Acts! This kind of assertion, which I fear expresses the opinion of some of these aristocratic doctors is calculated to make the medical profession (as a friend expressed it) 'stink in the nostrils of the moral and religious people of England'." (p. 249)

Dr. McHugh's monograph complements the recent work on Victorian resistance to vaccination and vivisection by Macleod, French, and others. Between them, these authors have opened up a fertile area which deserves further systematic exploration.

W. F. Bynum
Wellcome Institute

IAN LEVITT and CHRISTOPHER SMOUT, *The state of the Scottish working class in 1843*, Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press, 1979, 8vo, pp. x, 284, illus., £7.50.

In 1843 a Royal Commission began an assessment of the adequacy of the Scottish Poor Law. By comparison with England the Scottish system was no more than a legal skeleton fleshed out very erratically with voluntary contributions. The system, which made no provision for able-bodied paupers, was an object of pride to those who saw the individualistic ethic as the backbone of Scotland. To others such as W. P. Alison, Professor of Medicine at Edinburgh, it was a subject of shame. One of the first acts of the Commission was to send a detailed questionnaire to the minister of the established church in every parish. The seventy questions to which the incumbent had to produce replies covered all those aspects of the lives of the poor that bore on relief: food, work, wages, sickness, emigration, and so forth. Replies were received from 93 per cent of the 906 parishes involved, the bulk of the omissions unfortunately arising from the failure of the large towns, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Paisley, and Perth, to produce answers. The data are stored in the appendices to the *Royal Commission on the Poor Law (Scotland)*. Until now historians have raided it for the isolated illustrative fact.

The authors of the aptly entitled *The state of the Scottish working class in 1843* have used the information for quite different purposes. Selecting the pertinent questions they have produced as comprehensive a picture as possible of the economic life of the poor all over Scotland in a single year. Statistical information about myriad factors is presented in easily readable tables and maps. These are accompanied by lucid essays on the major topics. Fortunately this marriage of essays and tables does not prohibit their being comprehensible independently. The data presented range from the obvious, such as information about wages or diet, to the less immediate but equally important figures on the distribution of public houses.

This book is a model of its kind. Through painstaking research the authors have built up a minute description of the miserable condition of the Scottish poor that is more than a catalogue of numbers. In terms of the overall picture the authors point out how little effect the industrial revolution had had in much of Scotland by 1840. Second, although they reaffirm the old Highland/Lowland distinction, they also point to the vast variegation of poverty and relative affluence within these regions. Included in the volume is an excellent chapter on the sick poor which spells out in numerical

Book Reviews

detail exactly how sparse medical care was in Scotland. Even if it were available, the authors show that the stringency of the Scottish Poor Law may have denied access to it. One of their tables (9.B) “shows how much was actually spent on doctors per head of the population on the poor roll. The Scottish average was £0.0154, or no more than 3½d per pauper per year in the old money” (p. 217). The comprehensiveness and range of figures the authors have been able to produce will be the envy of English historians. The homeland of conjectural history after all is also the repository of the *Statistical Account*.

Christopher Lawrence
Wellcome Museum at the Science Museum

J. F. HEALY, *Mining and metallurgy in the ancient world*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1978, 8vo, pp. 316, illus., £11.00.

Professor Healy has given us an excellent handbook that incorporates the results of mineralogical and archaeological research and offers glimpses of the social and economic consequences of ancient techniques. Two sections are of particular medical interest. Following Dr. Longfield-Jones, the author clearly sets out the materials, composition, and construction of ancient medical instruments, most of which were of iron or bronze, although gold and silver were occasionally used, if frowned upon for ostentation. Some could be very complicated (F. Kiechle, *Sklavenarbeit und technischer Fortschritt*, 1969, p. 37f., is valuable here), and Galen records instruments specifically designed (II 643f., but never actually made) and of the best Norican iron/steel (II 682, 709 – the first reference is absent, the second mangled on p. 290). In the Ephesian medical contests c. A.D. 190, there may have been an annual competition for new instruments (J. Keil, *J. Öst. arch. Inst.* 1905, 128).

The use of minerals in medicine receives briefer notice, and is derived almost entirely from Pliny. The Greek tradition is largely ignored: there is no mention of the new ‘Mineral Book’ of Xenocrates (M. Ullmann, *Med. hist. J.* 1972, 49; 1973, 59), or of the many medicinal earths like the famous Lemnian earth. The many notes surprisingly have no direct reference to Galen’s detailed reminiscences of his visit to the mines of Cyprus and his medicinal finds there (XII 214–44), although a mineralogical commentary would be of great value. Neither is there a mention of the major work of D. Goltz, *Studien zur Geschichte der Mineralnamen . . .* 1972, which deals at length with ancient mineral drugs. But these omissions should not obscure our debt to the author for his sure-footed guidance over some very rough terrain.

Vivian Nutton
Wellcome Institute

CARLO M. CIPOLLA, *I pidocchi e il Granduca*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1979, 8vo, pp. 113, L. 5,000 (paperback)

Professor Cipolla has given us another vignette of the problems of public health in seventeenth-century Italy. This time his subject is an outbreak of exanthematous typhus in Florence in 1620–21, but his acute observations have much wider relevance. His heroes are the doctors and public health officials, struggling to check an epidemic in the face of appalling social conditions and indifference, even hostile disobedience,