

Book Reviews

ETIENNE VAN DE WALLE, *The female population of France in the nineteenth century. A reconstruction of eighty-two départements*, Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. xix, 483, illus., \$21.50 (£11.30).

The purpose of this book is to present the statistical basis of a proposed analysis of the social and economic factors responsible for the decline of fertility in nineteenth-century France. It is part of a series of volumes on the fall in European fertility, and the project is being carried out by the Office of Population Research at Princeton University. The investigation is an attempt to provide greater understanding of the reasons for the decline by studying fertility trends in 700 European provinces over the last century.

The decline began in most European countries towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the upheaval deriving from the change from agrarian to industrial society is usually held to be responsible. France is of special interest because the decline of marital fertility seems to have taken place before 1830, despite the fact that the Industrial Revolution was having less effect there than in England. Thus the study of French population movements may be of vital importance to French history in general, and detailed investigation is warranted. Dr. van de Walle, Professor of Demography in the University of Pennsylvania, therefore, sought demographic data from earlier periods. However the official statistics proved to be inadequate and he decided to make from them a systematic reconstruction of the female population by *département* throughout the nineteenth century. His book publishes these data and provides demographers, historians, social scientists, and others with the estimated female population of France in the nineteenth century by age and marital status, adjusted estimates of births, and estimates of various demographic indices such as marital and illegitimate fertility, age at marriage, and expectation of life at birth. Much of this is statistical and more than half the book consists of tables. It is the raw material which other scholars will use for a number of purposes. The author provides no interpretations for the causes of the decline, but plans to present these in a future volume. His most important task will be to place the phenomenon in its social and cultural context and to find out why France is ahead of the rest of Europe in the fertility decline, and why some *départements* are ahead of the rest of France.

It will be at this stage that the interest of the historian of medicine will increase, and although he may not find the statistics and demographical niceties of this volume very much to his liking, he should be aware of the data which form the basis for the promised interpretations of them. It is clear that demography should be more closely associated with medical history, for many of its problems are similar, although its methods are different. On each side there is a need for more understanding of the other, and it is important, therefore, that outstanding books of this nature should be brought to the notice of historians of medicine.

JACQUES BARZUN (editor), *Burke and Hare; the resurrection men, etc.*, Metuchen, N. J., The Scarecrow Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. xvi, 368, illus., £10.50.

Professor Barzun has gathered together contemporary documents, including broadsheets, occasional verses, illustrations, polemics and a complete transcript of

Book Reviews

the testimony given at the trial of Burke and Hare (pp. 5–228), thus providing an excellent collection of primary sources; all are to be found in the Fenwick Beekman Collection at the New York Academy of Medicine. There is also a brief editorial introduction and a useful list of the *dramatis personae*. The material is reproduced in facsimile and includes illustrations; most of the items, especially the ephemera, are very rare. From it a detailed account of the episode is obtained together with the reaction of the public to it. But in addition there are other benefits to be derived: information on the medical profession in Edinburgh during the 1820s, especially concerning anatomists and the teaching of anatomy; an appreciation of social conditions, legal procedure and of methods of communicating at that time. The only criticism is that some of the reproductions are poor, presumably due to the present state of the originals.

This method of collecting together facsimiles of publications concerning a single medical episode could well be repeated, for there have been numerous events in previous centuries that generated a great deal of literature manuscript, printed, and illustrative, much of which is now very scarce. Medico-legal cases such as this one lend themselves readily to the technique, but others ranging from Mrs. Stephens' stone cure to Mary Toft's so-called rabbit breeding imposture would be ideal topics. A similar type of publication, intended, however, more for teaching and at a less specialized level, presented portfolios of copied documents illustrating advances in certain aspects of history and proved to be popular.

JACQUES BARZUN, *Clio and the doctors. Psycho-history, quanto-history and history*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. xi, 173, £4.35, \$7.95.

Recently psycho-history, purveyed in the last two years mainly by the *History of Childhood Quarterly*, *The Journal of Psycho-history* and the Psycho-history Press, has come into existence. Its advocates are concerned with the subconscious, background drives, illusions, urges, obsessions and with other psychological phenomena which they believe govern a person's actions. The significance of an action does not reside in it, and an act or statement is thus a myth which has to be analysed and interpreted.

Professor Barzun of Columbia University attacks this new approach to history, and also finds the application of statistics to history, quanto-history as he calls it, equally unacceptable. He puts forward powerful arguments in favour of the traditional type of historiography and will thereby receive solid support from the older generation of historians. He cites a number of ludicrous interpretations arrived at by means of the new tools, and in general roundly denounces "the doctors", that is the psycho-analysts and the statisticians.

Concerning the latter he probably goes too far because a certain amount of quantification will always be valuable in history, as long as the user of it recognizes its significance and the pitfalls it can lead to. There is, however, much more support for his attitude towards psycho-history, and one need only read any of the articles in the *History of Childhood Quarterly* to be astounded by what passes for history. Barzun will without doubt infuriate the psycho-historians and they will find many