

Book Reviews

FRANCIS HITCHING, *Earth magic*, London, Cassell, 1976, 8vo, pp. xiv, 196, illus., £4.50.

For centuries the stone circles, barrows, dolmens and hill "forts" that are found in Northern Europe and Britain have attracted continual attention and bitter controversy. They mostly date from the fifth to second centuries B.C. and many of them have been shown to have acted as calendars and prognosticators of astronomical events.

Mr. Hitching, an amateur archaeologist, presents an excellent survey of the theories that have been put forward to explain the paradox of a primitive people indulging in advanced technology that called for immense labour and infinite precision. A pattern seems to emerge from the location of megalithic sites, for straight lines can be drawn through several of them, and it is contended that the end result was a kind of power-grid emitting "stone force" detectable by dowsers and perhaps related to extra-terrestrial contacts. The central question of the book is, therefore, "Is there an earth magic or hidden force known by our ancestors but not by us?"

Although many will be sceptical of the theories here promulgated, there nevertheless remains a fascinating enigma. Perhaps a parallel survey of contemporary folk-lore and medicine with the idea of earth magic in mind would be illuminating, although the sources for this will be scanty, unreliable and mostly undateable.

A. LANDBOROUGH THOMSON, *Half a century of medical research*, volume 2, *The programme of the Medical Research Council (U.K.)*, London, H.M.S.O., 1975, 8vo, pp. xii, 402, illus., £10.00.

Whereas the first volume of this excellent survey traced the origins of the Medical Research Council, the second describes its activities during the first fifty years of its existence. During this period it has contributed to a very wide range of medical research and it is dealt with here in three sections: 'The general field', on curative and preventive medicine and basic medical science; 'Some special fields', including industrial and social medicine, tropical medicine, medicinal substances, biological standards and the Public Health Laboratory Service; 'War medicine', covering both world wars. As in the first volume, appendices provide useful reference data.

This record of British achievement is a remarkable one and it is related here in an engaging style by one who contributed importantly to the organization of the various projects. The two volumes can be warmly recommended to historians of the medical sciences, for they provide an excellent account of government-sponsored medical research, which demonstrates the value of such a system. It is inevitable that this volume should cost more than the first of 1973, but the more than doubled price seems excessive.

HARRY KEEN and JOHN JARRETT (editors), *Triumphs of medicine*, London, P. Elek, 1976, fo., pp. 193, illus., £12.50.

The editors' aims are to point out to the layman the major achievements in medical science, including treatment, understanding of disease, diagnosis, and preventive medicine. To fulfil them they have enlisted the services of seventeen "internationally eminent specialists", who discuss broad topics such as 'The conquest of infection', 'The body's chemistry', 'Breathing and health', 'Brain, mind and nervous system',

Book Reviews

'Childhood and infancy', etc. It is suggested that the overall benefit to the reader will be a better understanding of medicine today, how it reached the present state, and what is likely to happen in the future.

Concerning the second of these, historical material is frequently used in both text and illustrations. It is perhaps unfortunate that although this part of the book is obviously of importance to the overall aims, a professional historian of medicine was not included amongst the contributors or employed as consultant for the various sections.

Nevertheless, the editors and their collaborators have produced a useful and attractive volume which should be popular with both layman and health sciences worker.

MAGDALENA SOLOSKA, JACEK HOLOWKA and ANTONINA OSTROWSKA (editors), *Health, medicine, society*, Dordrecht and Boston, D. Reidel, 1976, 8vo, pp. xi, 516, \$39.50.

In August of 1973 an international conference on the sociology of medicine was held in Warsaw, and this book contains a selection of the papers presented, arranged in five groups: 'Health and society'; 'The transformation of medical intervention'; 'Sociological insights into the health sciences'; 'The health system'; 'Teaching'. One of the objectives of the meeting was "to review with general sociologists and physicians the different theoretical sources from which the sociology of medicine has evolved". This is, therefore, the main attraction for the historian, but the volume can also be recommended as a reliable source of information concerning present-day sociological problems, a vital necessity for those engaged in the field of the social history of medicine.

GEORGE KRIEGMAN, ROBERT D. GARDNER and D. WILFRED ABSE (editors), *American psychiatry past, present, and future*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1975, 8vo, pp. xiv, 205, [no price stated].

The first American public and state-supported mental hospital was established in Williamsburg in 1773 and to commemorate this event a meeting was held in 1973. Topics were carefully planned, and speakers, representing psychiatry, sociology, law, and history, solicited. The programme was divided into three parts: four papers giving perspective and including, 'The bicentennial of Eastern State Hospital', 'American psychiatry in the eighteenth century', 'American psychiatry: past, present, and future'; psychiatric therapy, dealing mainly with present-day problems; the role of psychiatry in society, where again current situations and future possibilities are discussed, one by Charles Rosenberg, 'The crisis in psychiatric legitimacy', being especially noteworthy. In the case of each group, the discussion evoked is included. These papers will be of interest to the practising psychiatrist and the historian of medicine alike.

ELLIOTT M. BLASS (editor), *The psychobiology of Curt Richter*, Baltimore, Md., York Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. xxxi, 399, illus., \$18.00.

For fifty-six years Dr. Curt Paul Richter (born 1894) has been carrying out research