

Book Reviews

E. SNORRASON, *C. G. Kratzenstein and his studies on electricity during the eighteenth century*, Odense University Press, 1974, pp. 206, illus., Dan.kr.80.

Dr. Snorrason's biographical study of Christian Gottlieb Kratzenstein is the first monograph in English on this eighteenth-century pioneer of electrotherapy. Although Kratzenstein (1723–1795) spent four decades teaching at the University of Copenhagen, he was German by birth and education, having studied at the University of Halle. When he went there in 1742, Halle was still dominated by the influence of Georg Stahl and Friedrich Hoffmann, though Kratzenstein's most famous work—published when he was only twenty-one—was prepared under the direction of another Halle Professor, Johann Gottlob Krüger. Krüger and Kratzenstein first investigated the therapeutic use of electricity. Their initial results were published under Kratzenstein's name in a little booklet in 1744; this edition has apparently completely disappeared. Dr. Snorrason has included in the present volume a facsimile reprint and English translation of the second edition (1745) of this work, *Abhandlung von dem Nutzen der Electricität in der Arzneywissenschaft*.

Kratzenstein continued his interest in the medical uses of electricity, but his subsequent activities included physics, chemistry, natural history, geology, as well as the practice of medicine. He also played a vigorous part in the administrative life of the University of Copenhagen, four times serving as rector of the university. Dr. Snorrason chronicles his subject's career with enthusiasm and elaborate documentation from both printed and archival sources. His English is sometimes quaint but his meaning is generally clear, despite the book's somewhat chaotic organization. The attractiveness of the volume is enhanced by a number of illustrations and maps. It has a full bibliography.

MICHAEL DRAKE, *Historical demography; problems and projects*, Milton Keynes, The Open University Press, 1974, 4to, pp.160, illus., £3.95.

Historical demography, a rapidly expanding field of research, is a study of population phenomena occurring in the past, which uses a variety of techniques employed by modern demographers to illustrate the present concerns of the social sciences.

It should be thought of as a vital part of the history of medicine, but for the time being it is developing on its own. To know more about it, this book and the course of which it is part should be studied carefully by all interested in the social history of medicine. It is divided into four units: population and economy; population and society; *la crise démographique*; migration. As with other Open University publications this one provides an outstanding teaching manual: the text is succinct and well written, there are appropriate and sometimes dramatic illustrations, there are questions and answers, and an excellent bibliography is appended. It is altogether an excellent introduction to the subject, and it is to be hoped that medically qualified persons will be inspired by it to enter the field of historical demographic research to help with some of the many medical problems encountered. This would be good for the discipline itself, but, just as importantly it might help to bring it closer to the history of medicine, an essential that is obvious enough but which has yet to be brought about.