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twopenny spoonfuls often by people who, carried along by the then powerful temperance movement, had forsworn the more traditional forms of drink. For years the outside world remained ignorant of this social problem and it was not until 1890, word having finally seeped through to Westminster, that ether was scheduled under the 1870 Poisons Act. Other problems have since come to the fore.

Illegitimacy in Catholic Ireland was extremely low throughout the 19th century and remains so today. In two essays (one of them on marriage) Professor Connell demonstrates how this situation comes from a combination of circumstances that is probably unique to Ireland: tight family life, high emigration, national patterns of inheritance, and the church's control over sexual morals. Presenting us with the realities of life in a theocratic state he also makes us realize what a matchless facility the ordinary Irishman has for speaking picturesque English. There is the story, for instance, as told by an aggrieved young man, of how he and his girl friend had once been disturbed by an over-zealous priest who 'came on us as we were walking peacefully on the shore road one night, and if he didn't give up with his umbrella, and give her several licks of it on the head and shoulders.' Shades of Cromwell's Major-generals.

E. GASKELL

The Treatment of Head Injuries in the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648): Joannes Scultetus and his Age, by LOUIS BAKAY, Springfield, Illinois, C. C. Thomas, 1971, pp. xii, 106, illus., \$9.00.

Readers of this book will share Dr. Bakay's gratitude to the Piarist fathers of Budapest who gave him his love of old books and an enviable proficiency in Latin. He has translated the *Armamentarium Chirurgicum* of Joannes Scultetus (1595–1645) from the Frankfurt edition of 1666, the *Tractatus Perutilis et completus de Fractura Cranei* (3rd edition, Venice, 1535) of Berengario da Carpi and a late seventeenth-century edition of *Observationum et Curationum Chirurgicum Centuria* by Fabricius Hildanus. The parts of these works dealing with cranio-cerebral injuries, and particularly the first of them, form the basis of his appraisal of the neurosurgical scene on the battlefields and in the hospitals of this disturbed period of European history and they are enriched with relevant extracts from the experiences of Ambroise Paré. Local colour from the battles (invariably crimson) is supplied by vivid extracts from the account of the battle of Wittstock in Grimmelshausen's *Der Abenteuerliche Simplicissimus* (Mompelgart, 1669)—again translated by the author—with illustrations from woodcuts, fortunately for the squeamish not too well defined, by Jacques Callot (1592–1635).

Separate chapters deal with the original sources and their interesting authors, the history of the war, the soldiers, the surgeons and the medical management. There is much of interest concerning the weapons. The more fortunate soldiers had wheel-lock muskets but there were still some with match-lock firing devices which tragically were liable to ignite the powder pouches on the bandoliers. The slowness of the ball in transit tended to cause a depressed rather than a penetrating wound whereas the bolt from a crossbow could readily puncture a skull. Seemingly less fortunate and more expendable were the pikemen who awaited the charges of the Swedish cavalry.

The surgical instruments were surprisingly modern in design and the treatment in

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general sound in principle, some of it curiously unaltered since the days of Theodoric and Johannes de Mirfeld. Evidently a seventeenth-century neurosurgeon kept his fingernails long in readiness for the removal of an exposed pericranium. The selected case histories of Scultetus (23 out of the 100 concern the skull and brain) make interesting reading showing a conservative approach to treatment which is commendable.

Dr. Bakay, whose scholarly treatment of a serious subject is occasionally, and delightfully, betrayed by a spontaneous wit, has tried with success to view surgical problems of that time in the light of reasonably fair knowledge of anatomy but dismal ignorance of brain function. Experience counted for much: Scultetus probably did not believe the astrologer-surgeons who held that it was dangerous to trephine at full moon when the brain was thought to be swollen and 'near to the skull', but he may well have been aware of the phenomenon of a post-traumatic cerebral oedema even if not of its underlying mechanism. Trephination for a comminuted fracture of the skull, he stated, should be undertaken when the patient had recovered from the immediate shock but not after the third day: the operation would then be fraught with danger.

W. H. MCMENEMEY

Gerard van Swieten and his World 1700–1722, by FRANK T. BRECHKA, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1971, pp. x, 171, illus., 31.50 guilders.

The aim of this book—as is clear from its title—is to present Gerard van Swieten and his world. This is no modest objective, for it requires a grasp of all the facets of a personality of the Enlightenment who was deeply rooted in the social and cultural conditions of The Netherlands but who was destined to reach the climax of his activity, which became historically relevant, in the complex organization of the Hapsburg Empire. These facts as well as van Swieten's sphere of action provide material for chapters in every biography of van Swieten: Early years in Holland; A pupil of Boerhaave; The commentaries on Boerhaave; The Dutch Enlightenment; The appointment at Vienna; Personal physician to Maria Theresa; Protomedicus of the Court; Director of the Imperial Library; His activity as scientist and practitioner; His influence on European medicine; The reform of the Medical Faculty; The introduction of bedside teaching in Vienna; The foundation of a school of medicine; The foundation of new (Tyrnau) and the reform of existing medical faculties (Prague, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, Pavia); The organization of the Austrian medical service; His co-operation in drafting the public health laws of Maria Theresa; Censorship; His attitude towards Jansenism, etc.

The first task for anybody attempting such a biography must be to assign to these chapters the space in his biography which is due to them because of their historical importance. It is self-evident that van Swieten's Viennese period must be placed in the centre as it was here that van Swieten's activities achieved historical dimensions.

The present author has divided this vast material into four great chapters: I. The early years (pp. 7–50); II. Leiden (pp. 51–97); III. Maria Theresa (pp. 98–110); IV. Vienna (pp. 111–46). Our misgivings are aroused by the fact that in a book which comprises 171 pages, only 35 (pp. 111–46) are given to the Viennese activities of van Swieten, while 90 pages (pp. 7–97) are devoted to the Dutch period. This evident disproportion might be justified if it had yielded convincing results. Brechka's