

Book Reviews

PAMELA HORN, *The Victorian country child*, Kington, Roundwood Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. xv, 244, illus., £6.00.

Much has been written on children of the nineteenth-century British industrial labouring class, dwelling in city slums, exploited by unscrupulous masters, and immortalized by Charles Dickens. Far less is known of their contemporaries in the country, despite the fact that agricultural labourers comprised in 1837 the largest group of workers in England, and that by 1851 they made up one-fifth of the nation's adult work-force. Mrs. Horn's purpose is to trace the day-to-day experiences of the children of farm workers and village craftsmen, and she deals mainly with the 1880s and 1890s, restricting herself topographically mainly to the South Midlands.

Remembering childhood holidays in the country, one imagines that the country child was in all ways better off than his town counterpart. However, his advantages were marginal because he was living under equally primitive and insanitary conditions, and was assailed by both compulsory schooling and parental exploitation in the fields or in local cottage industries. But parents and employers were usually willing to sacrifice education so that the child could be rendered economically viable at the earliest possible age. One of the most interesting features of this process is that exactly the same had happened to town children several decades earlier. It had been resolved by means of reforms, yet identical evils still existed, now transferred to the country. Up till now this striking fact has been little appreciated.

The author draws her material from a number of primary sources, especially school logs, and from secondary literature. The appendices contain details of housing, diet, household economics, accounts of personal experiences, and reports on rural activities. Some amount of oral history has been employed, and this, together with the manuscript material used, tends to concentrate the study on Oxfordshire and neighbouring counties, although the same conditions were presumably countrywide.

Chapter ten deals with 'Sickness and its cure'. In it the medical, hygienic, therapeutic and prophylactic aspects of the country child are discussed adequately and accurately. The common disorders are mentioned, but not rickets. It would be interesting to know if greater exposure to sunlight made it less common than in the town child, who had an equally rachitic diet.

Mrs. Horn's book is an important addition to the history of the child, for she has surveyed a previously neglected, large group, and has produced an excellent scholarly and well-illustrated account replete with information, much of it original. There is at the moment an increasing interest in the history of paediatrics, and this book as a contribution to it can be recommended enthusiastically.

WERNER FORSSMANN, *Experiments on myself. Memoirs of a surgeon in Germany*, translated by Hilary Davies, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. xiv, 352, \$10.95.

In 1929 Forssmann (b. 1904) carried out cardiac catheterization for the first time on a human being, himself. Thirty-seven years later he shared a Nobel Prize in Medicine or Physiology for his brief but pioneer work in cardiological investigations. The rest of his career was spent in surgery, in particular urology, and he provides for us here