Book reviews

Green Medicine. By Margaret B. Kreig. George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, London 1965. Pp. 462. 35s.

This book describes the revival of interest in medicinal plants in recent years. It also gives the historical background, including the uses of plants by native tribes. The author spent four years collecting her information and travelled the astonishing total distance of 70,000 miles in the process. She met a wide variety of experts, in the laboratories and in the field. She had some arduous adventures, including an expedition into the jungle of Peru, the account of which occupies twenty-five pages.

There are references to nearly forty plants which are in the homeopathic materia medica. There are references to others which have not been proved homeopathically; some of these might be of interest to the Drug Proving Committee of the Faculty of Homœopathy when they make their annual selection of a drug for proving.

The book is rich in descriptions of personalities—doctors, pharmacists, chemists, ethnobotanists and others. There are glimpses of the keen rivalry between the big drug firms in their efforts to find new medicinal plants and to re-discover old ones. Staggering sums are spent in exploration and research.

One chapter, "The Incredible History of Quinine", is a depressing account of avarice and rivalry. As is only to be expected, there is no mention of the inspiration which quinine gave Hahnemann. But there is at least one instance of the homeopathic principle; on page 343 Mrs Kreig writes "For a psychiatrist to administer a hallucinating substance may seem like carrying the 'hair of the dog that bit you' theory to extremes". She appears to be unaware that she is only on the threshold of a neglected field of truth. Perhaps homœopaths in the USA have written to invite her to explore it.

Like all good books, this has a good index and a good bibliography, occupying a total of 29 pages. The wide range of the subject matter and the wide range of Mrs Kreig's reading make it a book of unusual interest to many different readers, but especially to those who distrust synthetic drugs and wish to extend the use of the remedies provided by nature.

N.J.P.

Fringe Medicine. By Brian Inglis. Faber and Faber have now brought out a paper-back edition of this book which was reviewed in BHJ, 53, 138, April 1964. The price of the paper-back edition is 9s. 6d.