Book Reviews

Peter H. Ramsey, ed. *The Price Revolution in Sixteenth-Century England*, "Debates in Economic History," General Editor, Peter Mathias. London: Methuen, 1971. Pp. xii, 182.

Peter Ramsey has made a judicious selection of the articles by Hammarström, Phelps Brown and Hopkins, Brenner, Gould, Challis, and Hamilton around which a good portion of the debate about Tudor economic and social change has revolved. The main arguments are here available in their original form to give the graduate student and the established scholar perspective on the issues. The pitfalls to easy generalization about devaluation and inflation, size of money supply, price levels (especially the distinction between whole-sale vs. retail prices), and the use of economic equations when dealing with the sixteenth century are solidly presented in this collection. Because Earl J. Hamilton's work is the target of several contributors, a representative article by the great student of Andalusian price movements is welcome. It helps the student understand why he has so long exercised persuasive authority. The contribution of Challis provides a succinct counterstatement to J.D. Gould's *The Great Debasement* (Oxford, 1971), the only work which goes beyond the scope of these selections. One possible gap in Ramsey's presentation is a discussion of the coinage, similar to P. Grierson, "The Monetary Pattern of Sixteenth-Century Coinage," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser. XXI (1971), 25-44. This could have displaced some of the reiterated criticisms of Irving Fisher's equation $MV=PT$.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the volume is the second part of Ramsey's admirable introduction. With the hardheaded economic logic which informs his whole discussion, he accepts the fact that rising population, not increased money supply, caused the hardships associated with sixteenth-century English inflation—a conclusion which completely undermines the title of the book. The editor suggests how acceptance of population pressure as the economic variable of prime interest would lead to different assessments of other developments during the period than those which resulted from pre-occupation with changes in the money supply. Ramsey's call for a price index for different classes, not just building labourers, should also be fruitful of greater understanding of the processes of economic change in the sixteenth century.

JAMES E. FARNELL, *New York University*

Rémy Belleau. *Les Amours et nouveaux échanges des pierres précieuses*. Ed. Maurice F. Verdier. Textes Littéraires Français, 197. Geneva: Droz, 1973. Pp. xlvii, 300.

With the current fascination being exerted by the occult, how timely is the publication of this new edition of Rémy Belleau's *Les Amours et nouveaux échanges des pierres précieuses*. This volume of poetry belongs within the genre of sixteenth-century scientific poetry. Belleau and the other members of the Pléiade believed that the poet was a prophet and seer to whom a secret Knowledge of the universe was imparted. Most of Belleau's 31 poems describe the nature, characteristics and magical properties of certain precious stones, while a small number (I, IV, V, VII, VIII, IX, XIV, XXII, XXIII, XXVI) conform more