

Book Reviews

JOHN WOODWARD and DAVID RICHARDS (editors), *Health care and popular medicine in nineteenth century England. Essays in the social history of medicine*, London, Croom Helm, 1977, 8vo, pp. [vi], 195, £7.95.

Present-day medical historians are well aware that the social aspects of the history of medicine have in the past suffered relative neglect and that more and deeper studies in this area are needed. The editors' contribution to this in the present work is to bring together six essays which deal with the inter-relationships between medicine and society, mainly in the first half of the nineteenth century. The chief themes concern the social role of the medical practitioner, conflict within the medical profession, and knowledge of sex and birth control. These are of vital importance to an adequate appreciation of the development of medicine in the nineteenth century and each is discussed in scholarly articles contributed by economic and social historians; no medical authors are included.

In an introductory essay, 'Towards a social history of medicine', the editors discuss the lack of co-operation between history, medicine, and the social sciences in the past, but have little to say about Shryock's important work in this field and nothing about that of Charles Rosenberg. They then survey the various areas that can be developed; however, these are mostly well known and accepted as potential points of advancement. They agree that a knowledge of the past will help with the solution of present and future problems, but some may be sceptical of this praiseworthy hope. The other articles are on popular theories of generation, the early birth control movement, doctors and women in nineteenth-century society, the social role of the medical community in Sheffield 1790-1850, and on the conflict between general practitioners and consultants in the early nineteenth century. As the editors admit, there is also need for the consideration of these and other topics as they concern foreign countries in order to deepen the study of the social history of medicine with a comparative dimension.

R. H. WARD and K. M. WEISS (editors), *The demographic evolution of human populations*, London, Academic Press, 1976, 4to, pp. xii, 158, illus., £4.50.

These ten papers arose from a symposium on 'Demographic aspects of the biology of human population' held in 1974. It is widely agreed that differences in demographical parameters are necessary for the evolutionary process to occur, but the evaluation of regulating factors derives from theoretic models rather than from natural populations. Recently acquired data allow some general conclusions concerning the inter-relationship between demographical parameters and the process of evolutionary change. This is the book's first aim, and the second is the guidance to fruitful areas for further research offered, also resulting from new information. For the purpose of studying the biological consequences of demographic parameters, it has been agreed that standard demographic methods, the formulations of population genetics, and the field-work method used by anthropologists must be employed.

This is, therefore, a stimulating book which opens avenues for others to explore. Most of the essays contain technicalities which may defeat the non-demographer, but they set a high standard of scholarship and contribute usefully to an increasingly important discipline.