

## Book Notices

This book was commissioned by the Royal National Pension Fund for Nurses to celebrate its centenary. Founded by the indomitable Henry Burdett, the Fund campaigned, against all odds, to provide a pension scheme for nurses “who did not earn enough to protect themselves”. Changing to meet new social and economic situations, the Fund still prospers and today provides a variety of services for health care workers. Dr Maggs has researched the archives of the Fund and its associated literature and has given us an insight into the complexities of the insurance world, a study which highlights the high rate of sickness among those early nurses, and at the same time their sturdy response to the precepts of Samuel Smiles and calls for thrift and self-help.

RENÉ DUBOS, *Mirage of health: utopias, progress and biological change* (1959), repr. ed., New Brunswick, NJ, and London, Rutgers University Press, 1987, 8vo, pp. vii, 282, \$25.00, \$10.00 (paperback).

Dubos's book, first published thirty years ago, is an important and still-controversial document from the first decade capable of extending ecological and liberal thinking to microbes. Among the mirages of health he described, that of a disease-free Golden Age may still be with us, in the form of a belief in “progress”. In the face of American complacency at the end of the 1950s, Dubos bitterly postulated that one symptom of mental illness may be the delusion that one enjoys the highest standard of living in the world. Another, related, illusion is the doctrine of specificity, more precisely, that micro-organisms “cause” disease. Public health was improving in Western Europe and North America before the germ theory of disease emerged “during the gory phase of Darwinism”. More or less by an accident of history, the laboratory scientist, the hero of the eleventh hour, took centre stage and the presuppositions that enable useful *experimental* work came to dominate popular thinking about the way we get ill, or not. But we all harbour a picturesque variety of potentially lethal micro-organisms. Our bodies are not “healthy”, but because the most successful parasite allows its victims as much life as is compatible with its own needs, we usually enjoy health.

They utterly exhaust each other.

They are the powers of this world.

We are their bacteria,

Dying their lives and living their deaths.

Ted Hughes's ‘Ghost Crabs’ could not have emerged from the sea before the first publication of this book.

KENNETH J. CARPENTER, *The history of scurvy and vitamin C*, paperback ed., Cambridge University Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. viii, 288, illus., £9.95/\$12.95.

A paperback edition of Professor Carpenter's history of scurvy and its cure, first published in 1986 to wide acclaim (cf. *Med. Hist.* 1987, 31: 231–2), is now available. The strictly chronological structure of the book not only helps the reader to follow a surprisingly complex narrative, but also imparts real tension and pace. Commendably, the author has resisted low irony when chronicling the suffering of nineteenth-century Arctic explorers and twentieth-century conscientious objectors (those handy experimental subjects), who, for different reasons, ought to have been spared this dreadful disease. Above all, he has achieved the rare balance between biomedical exegesis and historical sensibility, and made that achievement look easy.

### BOOKS ALSO RECEIVED

(The inclusion of a title does not preclude the possibility of subsequent review. Items received, other than those assigned for review, are ultimately incorporated into the collection of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.)

JACQUELINE M. ATKINSON, *Coping with stress at work: how to stop worrying and start succeeding*, Wellingborough, Northants, Thorsons, 1988, 8vo, pp. 144, £4.99, (paperback).

AMELIA D. AUCKETT, *Baby massage*, revised ed., Wellingborough, Northants, Thorsons, 1988, 8vo, pp. 75, illus., £3.99 (paperback).

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ALFONS BIEGER, *Prüfung der Ärzte und Wundärzte im Thurgau (1798–1867)*, Zürcher medizingeschichtliche Abhandlungen, no. 201, Zurich, Juris, 1988, pp. ii, 95, S.Fr. 25.00 (paperback).

A. I. BIERMAN, *Van artsenijmengkunde naar artsenijbereidkunde: ontwikkelingen van de Nederlandse farmacie in de negentiende eeuw*, Nieuwe Nederlandse bijdragen tot de geschiedenis der geneeskunde en der natuurwetenschappen, no. 26, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1988, 8vo, pp. ix, 312, [no price stated], (paperback).

*Bibliography of the history of medicine*, National Library of Medicine, no. 23, Bethesda, MD, US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, 1987, 8vo, pp. x, 326, [no price stated], (paperback).

IAN FRASER, *Exercise beats arthritis*, Wellingborough, Northants, Thorsons, 1988, £6.50 (cassette tape).

CARL HAFFTER (editor), *Die Entwicklung der Physiologie im 19. Jahrhundert und die Schweiz/L'essor de la physiologie au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle et la Suisse*, Symposium Lucerne 1987, *Gesnerus*, vol. 45, no. 2, Aarau, Sauerländer, 1988, 8vo. pp. 163–304, SFr. 47.00, (paperback).

RAFAEL HUERTAS GARCÍA-ALEJO (editor), *Orfila, Saber y Poder Medico*, Estudios sobre la Ciencia, 2, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1988, 8vo, pp. 456, illus., [no price stated].

URSULA MARKHAM, *Relax and overcome PMT*, Wellingborough, Northants, Thorsons, 1988, £6.50, (cassette tape).

JUDY PERLMUTTER, *Kick it*, Wellingborough, Northants, Thorsons, 1988, £6.50, (cassette tape).

KEN POWELL, *Beat stress and win*, Wellingborough, Northants, Thorsons, 1988, £6.50, (cassette tape).

ELIZABETH STEEL, *Coping with sudden hair loss*, Wellingborough, Northants, Thorsons, 1988, 8vo, pp. 176, £4.99, (paperback).

ARNOLD UEBELHART, *Richard Scharb (1880–1955)*, *Orthopäde und Muskelphysiologe*, Zürcher medizingeschichtliche Abhandlungen, Zurich, Juris, 1988, pp. xii, 311, illus., S.Fr. 60.00 (paperback).