

Let's hope that this lesson is learnt in time for the bicentenary.

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Lynn McDonald (ed.), *Florence Nightingale on public health care*, vol. 6, *Collected works of Florence Nightingale*, Waterloo, ON, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004, pp. xiii, 701, US\$95.00 (hardback 0-88920-446-2).

Lynn McDonald and her collaborators have taken on a mammoth task: that of collating and organizing "all the available surviving writing of Florence Nightingale". The work is a remarkable collective effort. The sixteen-volume series, *The collected works of Florence Nightingale*, is now almost half complete, with volumes on *Life and family* (2001), *Spiritual journey* (2001), *Theology* (2002), *Mysticism and eastern religions* (2003), *Society and politics* (2003), and *European travels* (2004) already published, in addition to *Public health care* (2004). The result is an intriguing insight into both the internal world of Florence Nightingale, and the priorities of McDonald as editor.

Nightingale's religious "calling" has long been a subject of debate for historians of her life and work. In stressing the spiritual drive behind Nightingale's work, McDonald's approach is in line with that of both one of the earliest writers on the subject (Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, 1918) and one of the latest (Dossey, *Florence Nightingale, mystic, visionary, healer*, 1999). Other recent writers have been more likely to emphasize Nightingale's family life, or the secular nature of her work (Woodham-Smith, *Florence Nightingale*, 1950; Smith, *Florence Nightingale: reputation and power*, 1982; Baly, *Florence Nightingale and the nursing legacy*, 1997). McDonald appears, in this volume, to take it for granted that religious calling was the foundation for Nightingale's endeavours, including her work in the field of public health. References to this calling and to the spiritual and religious nature of Nightingale's efforts appear repeatedly throughout the editorial sections of the volume, lending the work a unique flavour. In

this sense, the book is as much a reflection on the devout, but sometimes confused and conflicting religious currents in Victorian philanthropic thinking as on ideas about public health.

McDonald has chosen a range of texts to illustrate Nightingale's perspectives on and input into Victorian "sanitary reform" efforts. Three main areas are emphasized: firstly, the importance of Nightingale's *Notes on nursing for the labouring classes*, as both an expression of her philosophy on nursing, and a direct attempt to promote reform by enhancing popular knowledge; secondly, the efforts of Nightingale and her contemporaries to reform nursing in the workhouse infirmaries; and thirdly, Nightingale's perspectives on the nature of public health considered in broad terms and related to rural health, the colonies, and perceptions of contagion and germ theory.

Perhaps one of the most valuable elements within this volume is the detailed critical edition of Nightingale's *Notes on nursing for the labouring classes*. McDonald traces the provenance of this work in some detail, relating it, both in timing and in content, to the earlier and better-known edition: *Notes on nursing: what it is and what it is not* (January 1860) and the slightly later and improved version of May 1860. *Notes on nursing for the labouring classes* was published in April 1861, and intended for popular use. It was, indeed, referred to by Harriet Martineau as "your cheap *Notes on Nursing*" (p. 19). It was slightly revised and reprinted in 1868, with a further revision being proposed in 1875. McDonald presents us with a critical edition with bracketed additions from all four other versions. The result is a strange composite text which, whilst extremely difficult to read, serves as a valuable resource for scholars, illustrating, as it does, the very precise nature of the various alterations and amendments.

The second major contribution made by this volume to Nightingale studies is the presentation of a vast body of material on the reform of workhouse infirmaries. In this respect, the volume demonstrates how Nightingale's perspectives incorporated nurse training as part of a much broader approach. McDonald focuses considerable attention on the Liverpool

Workhouse Infirmary and on the work of Agnes Jones, who is portrayed through Nightingale's writings, but also through the editorial perspective of McDonald, as a paragon of Christian virtue and a martyr to the cause of nursing. In addition to a fairly detailed discussion of Jones's appointment and work in the main text, McDonald also devotes an appendix to a further consideration of her life, alongside those of John Sutherland and William Rathbone. The story of the reform of workhouse nursing is well told, through the carefully edited texts in this section of the volume, and provides a very useful resource.

The third useful element within *Florence Nightingale on public health care* is the insight it provides into Nightingale's perceptions of sanitary reform. The inclusion of Nightingale's treatise on *Sick nursing and health nursing* stands alongside her *Sanitary statistics of native colonial schools and hospitals* and her *Rural hygiene*, to illustrate the breadth of her perspective on public health.

Florence Nightingale on public health care is, then, a very useful resource for scholars in the fields of history of nursing and history of medicine. As well as providing the reader with carefully edited critical editions of some of Nightingale's most important works, it makes available to future scholarship in these fields a vast array of correspondence, notes and other unpublished material, which will enable a more thorough and complete understanding of Nightingale and her work.

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Helen King (ed.), *Health in Antiquity*, London and New York, Routledge, 2005, pp. xxii, 292, US\$87.50 (hardback 0-415-22065-3).

The publication of conference papers can be fraught with problems, as this volume shows. The original organizer of the conference gave up, some contributors drifted away, one died, others were added, and a valiant editor stepped in to link together essays that differ considerably in scope

and quality. The original theme seems to have been that of health, and the ancient Greek and Roman views on health, as opposed to disease, but, apart from Emma Stafford's paper on the cult of the goddess Hygieia, and Gillian Clark on Christian and pagan ascetics, this proved impossible—or a missed opportunity. Plutarch and Galen's discussion of health are briefly noted, those of Athenaeus of Attaleia and hellenistic doctors disregarded entirely. Philosophical (and later theological) discussions of the classification of "good things" are likewise omitted.

Instead, we are given four useful papers on the results of archaeological and palaeopathological surveys of ancient sites from Greek prehistory to Pompeii, showing more promise of things to come than overturning standard views. Another archaeological paper, by Ralph Jackson, is the highlight of the volume. He compares the written advice on bone surgery with the evidence of instruments and skeletal evidence to show the relative effectiveness of ancient bone surgery—and its complexity and ingenuity. This is a model of solid scholarship that integrates detailed evidence into a wider picture. In a more literary fashion John Wilkins tests the advice of medical writers on diet against that of cookbooks and food writers to assess the feasibility of medical dietetics for ordinary Greeks and Romans. He argues for a general similarity between the two, and draws attention to the way ancient preferences differed from those of modern dieticians. Two papers look generally at notions of health as applied to women (Helen King) and the disabled (Nicholas Vlahogiannis), interesting topics for which the ancient evidence is relatively sparse. The late Dominic Montserrat studies the Christian healing cult of SS. Cyrus and John at Menouthis, a nice introduction to a cult less familiar than that of Cosmas and Damian. Two further papers offer musings on the use of drama in modern healing and its potential application in ancient healing cults, and on the importance of a pleasant environment in modern hospital architecture and at certain ancient shrines. The latter is more successful in avoiding special pleading.