

that they do not block the promotion or prosperity of the younger generation or burden them with the costs of their support. She convincingly represents this as a critique of the notion that was spreading at the time that, at a certain age, people became useless, as compulsory retirement at sixty spread through the civil service (where Trollope had once worked) and state pensions were proposed for the remainder of the population; and of Trollope's own fear of being unable to work. Not long after, more optimistically, William Morris' utopia, *News from Nowhere* (1890) represented older people as long lived, vigorously working and fully integrated with their community.

Sometimes the argument is hard to follow for readers not intimately familiar with the works under discussion. Chase's grasp of the historical context is uneven. Good in parts, but she accepts too readily Laslett's now much-challenged argument that, because older and younger generations did not normally share a household through centuries of English history, there was little inter-generational support. Support and exchange – from older to younger as well as the reverse – was perfectly possible, and normal, when they could afford it, across the boundaries of separate households in the nineteenth century, as before.

Also, perhaps because she knows more about the nineteenth century than about earlier periods, her claims that from the 1870s, the 'public was aging and, for the first time in numbers and influence great enough to constitute a dominant perspective', and that society and culture were 'only just beginning to take old age into full account' and 'the aging population was newly visible' are overstated. People aged over sixty were only about five per cent of the UK population at this time, an exceptionally low proportion compared with ten per cent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the rapid increase through the twentieth century. She also underestimates the presence of older people in society and in visual and other cultural forms in earlier periods.

The book culminates in a discussion of the work of Charles Booth and the proposals for the first state old-age pensions, to which he contributed at the end of the century, taken as emblematic of the changing perceptions of older people. However, Booth's writings on poverty in old age cannot, as Chase suggests, be seen as seeking to represent the situation of *all* older people. His primary concern was with poverty and the need to remedy the poverty of too many older people, hence he, among others, proposed pensions. The pensions debate was not, as she claims, simply 'masculinised'. The plight of men who worked hard for years, only to end their lives in poverty, was a cause of concern, but so was the fact that most older people were female and tended to be poorer than men. When state pensions were introduced in 1908, they took the form they did – non-contributory, not insurance based – because most women could not afford insurance contributions; and Booth was not 'politically conservative'.

The pensions debate was not a product of an unprecedented preponderance of older people or symptomatic of their unusual cultural prominence, but a reformulation of a very old concern about impoverished, marginalised older people, and a sign of the belief that the wealthy country Britain had become, in which poor people were gaining a stronger political voice (aided by Booth among others), should do better by them. The spread of pensions and retirement in the twentieth century did increase age stratification and division, but this was an unintended consequence of a cluster of changes, including a real increase in numbers.

This book contains real insights into the literary representation of older people in the nineteenth century. It is less reliable in other respects.

Pat Thane,
Kings College, London

W.F. Bynum and Caroline Overy (eds),
Michael Foster and Thomas Henry Huxley,

Book Reviews

Correspondence, 1865–1895, Medical History Supplement, No. 28 (London: The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at UCL, 2009), pp. xix + 329, £35.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-8584-124-0.

Victorian men of science were great correspondents. Many of them corresponded incessantly, leaving behind a remarkable testimony of academic, political and social networks in nineteenth-century science and medicine. But they were also great correspondents in another respect. They knew how to write a good letter. Allusions to art, history and literature were integral to their communications. More than exchanging news and queries, it was a way to display wit and cultural education. It is striking, reading the correspondence of, for example, Charles Darwin, James Clerk Maxwell, William Thomson and others, with what ease these Victorians mastered the combination of scientific discussions, philosophical arguments, contemporary commentary, personal involvement and family affairs with humour, excellent form and impeccable standards for letter writing, even in brief notes.

The thirty years of correspondence between Michael Foster and Thomas Henry Huxley is no exception. This collection is a genuine pleasure to read in the old-fashioned way, for pleasure, with a cup of tea in front of the fire. It is a testament to a life-long friendship between two central characters in mid- and late Victorian science and medicine, and to what it meant to be a man of science on a daily basis. While Foster gradually emerges as a competent letter writer, Huxley is a natural. In itself, his sharp comments, irony, puns, playfulness, comprehensive scientific and classical knowledge, and wonderful dismantling way of puncturing his own public image, makes the reading worthwhile.

Today, we remember Huxley, whereas Foster is less known. The latter's importance for the success of the so-called Cambridge school of physiology, however, should not be underestimated. Foster and Huxley's correspondence adds to the layers of this,

demonstrating how much involved Foster was in the business at South Kensington where Huxley resided, and how close the links were between London and Cambridge. The new scientific elite emerging in London and, notably with the X-Club of which Huxley was one of the founding members, reacted strongly against the old Oxbridge power networks. Huxley himself, in his many addresses on universities and a liberal education, was instrumental in reinforcing this image of differences, opposition, tradition *vs* progress, connections *vs* meritocracy, and an old world and old knowledge *vs* a new world and new knowledge. The correspondence between Foster and Huxley reveals a much more nuanced picture, where Foster on occasion provides Huxley with details about Cambridge ways, and thus uses his friend and ally to criticise what is difficult for himself to do within the Cambridge system. It is good to be reminded that the world is always painted black and white for a reason and that we should always look behind and beyond rhetorical constructions. The correspondence between Foster and Huxley helps us to do just that.

For the historian, this collection is also an excellent source of anything from scientific details, questions of education, politics, institutions, professionalisation, and personal and international relationships. We learn a lot about the politics and inner workings of the Royal Society. This includes details about the way to Huxley's nomination as President of the Royal Society and how Foster proved invaluable to help pave the way, negotiating, smooth-talking reluctant Fellows and making sure that Huxley kept his position and control, even though he took a long leave of absence travelling to Italy because of his failing health. We learn about the care for family members and how that extended to friends and their children. One example is the care Foster and Huxley took in helping Horace Darwin, the ninth child of Emma and Charles Darwin, set up business in Cambridge. Then, of course, there are all the juicy bits of what they thought of their scientific peers, colleagues and fellow

members of the Royal Society. Altogether, through two high-powered and prolific correspondents, this volume presents a fascinating look behind the curtains of everyday life, for better and worse, among Victorian men of science and medicine.

The book comes with an introduction providing the necessary context, excellent scholarly footnotes and a first-rate index. Furthermore, through the generous courtesy of The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at UCL, the correspondence between Foster and Huxley is made available online at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/issues/180404, making this indispensable resource for anyone working on mid- and late Victorian science and medicine readily available and searchable. It would, of course, be whiggish for historians to talk about progress in science and medicine the way Foster and Huxley did: it is not, however, when it comes to online access of archival material. This is progress and we should be happy for it.

Peter C. Kjærgaard,
Harvard University

Steven Palmer, *Lauching Global Health: The Caribbean Odyssey of the Rockefeller Foundation*, Conversations in Medicine and Society (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. xi + 301, \$70.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-472-07089-3.

Steven Palmer's *Lauching Global Health: The Caribbean Odyssey of the Rockefeller Foundation* is a very welcome addition to the fascinating body of literature on the international health work of the Rockefeller Foundation (RF). This is not only because of the new insights it offers on the significance of RF philanthropy in the early twentieth century, but also, as Palmer points out, for the lessons it offers for the new generation of non-governmental operators in public health in this century, such as the Gates Foundation. The principal subject of this study is the hookworm

campaigns of the RF health division in the two Central American states of Costa Rica and Guatemala, and the two British Caribbean colonies of British Guiana and Trinidad. Palmer's stated objective is to explore these 'campaigns in depth and to treat them as an ensemble – as a laboratory for discovering and testing the elements of a global health system for the twentieth century' (p. 1).

The main source for this account is the archive of the Rockefeller Foundation. As Palmer himself emphasises much of the literature on RF health initiatives is driven by these sources, which has the tendency to produce an inevitable homogeneity in accounts. One counterweight to this, arguably, certainly in any exploration of the British colonies and Rockefeller initiatives, is the similarly voluminous archives of the British imperial government. For practical reasons perhaps, these are unfortunately but scantily consulted in this volume. However, Palmer's aim, to present a 'worm's eye' view which is grounded in the specific political, social and cultural contexts of his chosen areas, in itself presents an effective challenge to the temptations of the Rockefeller archive and enables this fruitful critique.

It is impossible to do justice in this short review to the wealth of evidence presented. The central chapters of the book examine such aspects as: the local politics; the composition of the hookworm teams; the role of local staff; and existing perceptions of hookworm disease. All these factors tested RF objectives, imposing a need to adapt, accommodate and modify. To take just one of these aspects as an illustration: in Guatemala, the teams were composed of elite white male physicians, despite the fact that their subjects were indigenous estate labourers; in Costa Rica they were middle-class men of mixed racial origin, if not doctors, then with degrees in pharmacy; in British Guiana, they had backgrounds as estate dispensers or sanitary technicians; whilst in Trinidad, they were mainly teachers. The local staff both reflected the different political, social and cultural contexts and, in turn, were instrumental in the production of