

Book Reviews

JULIET PIGGOTT, *Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps*, London, Lee Cooper, 1975, 8vo, pp. xvi, 105, illus., £4.50.

The author is a professional writer and provides an excellent account of the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service since its inception in 1902. In 1949 it became a corps, although members of it have always been known affectionately as Q.A.s. Its origins are to be found in the Boer War and the history of army nursing before it is first briefly reviewed here. Most of the book, however, deals with the two world wars and with the remarkable and heroic devotion displayed by nursing sisters in serving the wounded and sick in theatres of war throughout the world. And in peace-time too their tradition of selfless service has been outstanding. This tribute to them is, therefore, most welcome. Miss Piggott's book is intended for the general reader and is well illustrated but lacks references.

JOHN H. PLUMRIDGE, *Hospital ships and ambulance trains*, London, Seeley, Service, 1975, 8vo, pp. 203, £6.95.

Lt. Colonel Plumridge spent forty-two years in the Royal Army Medical Corps and had extensive experience during two world wars of the evacuation of the wounded by ship or train. This aspect of the medical features of military history has so far been almost completely neglected, so that an excellent little book on it, well illustrated and well written by probably the most experienced person able to compile such a treatise, is indeed welcome. He deals with his subject before the First World War and extends the account to the present day, with suggestions for the future; most of it, however, concerns the two war periods. A number of appendices are added, giving lists of naval hospital ships, 1608 to 1731, 1790 to 1854, during World War I, etc., tabulated details of military ambulance trains and descriptions of some of them. It is a pity that the references (pp. 188–192) are so rudimentary that some are impossible to trace. This, however, is the only major criticism of an admirable book by an octogenarian, other than a derogatory comment, which is now usual, concerning its prohibitive price.

E. HAAF and J. ZWERNEMAN, *Geburt – Krankheit – Tod in der afrikanisêhen Kunst*, Stuttgart, F. K. Schattauer, 1975, pp. [5 11.], 108, illus., DM.39.00.

The authors have gathered together a remarkable collection of items of African art, mostly wood carvings, to illustrate the three themes contained in their title. As indicated by the map provided they derive mainly from the Gold Coast and Central Africa and the pictures of them, five in colour, are of high quality. In each instance the artefact is described in the accompanying text and there is an account of the topic illustrated. A bibliography and a list of the places represented are at the end of the book.

The section on disease is of special interest, and in a few instances the authors have included a photograph of a patient with the disease depicted by the artist in his carving. Smallpox, leprosy, yaws, elephantiasis, tumour of the face, goitre, abdominal tumour and liver abscess are presented in this way.

This book will prove to be an excellent source-book of information and illustrations of primitive concepts of pregnancy, birth, disease and its treatment, and of death.