

## Book Reviews

STEPHEN ASHWAL (ed.), *The founders of child neurology*, Norman Neurosciences Series 1, San Francisco, Norman Publishing in association with the Child Neurology Society, 1990, pp. xii, 935, illus., \$95.00 (0-930405-26-9).

Ashwal has undertaken the mammoth task of bringing together biographical sketches, written by over 100 medical specialists, of 124 individuals who have made important contributions to the relatively new field of child neurology. A detailed introduction to the development of child neurology is followed by five chapters arranged chronologically from before 1800 through the evolution of paediatrics and neurology during the nineteenth century, to the present century when child neurology emerged as a speciality. For the reader not familiar with the history of medicine each chapter is preceded by an overview of medical and paediatric progress in the period covered. The result is the most comprehensive biographical work on the history of child neurology up to the present time.

Wherever possible, black and white photographs have been provided and illustrations of the classical medical conditions described. With such a large number of contributors differences in writing style are inevitable. Nevertheless, the cohesion of the whole leads to easy reading. While each author's contribution is well referenced, the need to refer to the introduction for references cited in each chapter's overview may prove irritating to some readers. The omission of chapter numbers is confusing as they are given in the list of credits. In spite of these minor deficiencies this book is an important one which will be of use and interest to medical historians and clinicians interested in the history of child neurology.

M. John Thearle, University of Queensland

JOHN SHEPHERD, *The Crimean doctors: a history of the British Medical Services in the Crimean War*, 2 vols, Liverpool Medical Studies 7, Liverpool University Press, 1991, pp. xviii + viii, 662, illus., £32.00 (paperback, 0-85323-177-X).

Modern wars are something of a magnet to medical and social as well as military historians, because they generate so much more documentation than the ordinary round of peacetime activities, and because that documentation is usually thought worthy of preservation. The Crimean War of 1854-1856 was the first major international conflict of the era to be fully reported in the daily press, and so generated a mass of journalistic records in addition to vast quantities of personal and official correspondence; and the political controversies which it aroused in Britain, largely as a result of this journalism, gave rise to forests of official enquiries during and after the war. Many important medico-historical issues can be explored through this material, from the professional status of physicians, surgeons and nurses to the diffusion (or non-diffusion) of new ideas on the transmission of cholera and the efficacy of chloroform anaesthesia.

John Shepherd's thorough and extremely detailed narrative is principally based on the archives of the Royal Army Medical Corps, on contemporary medical journals, and post-war medical commissions of enquiry, and contains, in the text, footnotes and appendices, an enormous amount of valuable biographical material. His book is the first to assemble material on the naval as well as the army medical service. But it is frankly, sometimes difficult to see the wood for the trees; and for a clearer picture of military structure and army hospital organization, readers will still need to refer to the three Crimean chapters of N. Cantlie's *History of the Army Medical Department* (1974), and to H. Strachan's *Wellington's legacy* (1984). One begins to suspect, however, that the war has been a happy hunting-ground for historians, biographers and polemicists for so long that most of the quarry has by now been captured. We know that Snow's findings on cholera were not acted upon by medical officers; we know that the latter were not, in the main, the monsters Florence Nightingale and Cecil Woodham-Smith often made them out to be. Nursing historians have illuminated the social and religious context of women's work in this war. One might quibble that Dr Shepherd might have made more use of the manuscript holdings of the Public Record Office or the British

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Library, but it is unlikely that this would have fundamentally altered the narrative of the war as a social and medical event which has been established for the best part of a decade.

Anne Summers, Department of Manuscripts, The British Library

ELIZABETH FEE and ROY M. ACHESON (eds), *A history of education in public health: health that mocks the doctors' rules*, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. xi, 349, £35.00 (0-19-261757-5).

Education is vital to the successful living of lives within society; public health, as the authors of one of the essays in this book state, is a "vital collective function". Put the two together and you should get a significant and relevant volume, of considerable interest to all socially-concerned persons. Unfortunately, however, the history of education has never managed to free itself from the stigma of dullness, for however important the process it often happens that the events which make a life interesting have nothing to do with what was learned in the classroom, while public health has always been the Cinderella of medical specialities. Yet if the title of this book (let alone the silly subtitle) is not encouraging, the book's intention is admirable: "to provoke and inform policy decisions about the future directions of medical education in all countries interested in building stronger and more effective health systems", by comparing and contrasting the development of public health education in Britain and the United States since the mid nineteenth century.

In the main, the story revealed is a sad one, of limited perspectives, confused aims and uncertain philosophies, dispersed responsibilities, poor recognition, under-funding, and lack of interest from the bulk of the medical profession. There are nine essays: three on the United States, four on Britain, and two, the first and last, which span the experience of both countries. The country-specific essays are interleaved, as it were, in chronological order, presumably to make on-going comparisons easier; wise readers will circumvent the confusion and disorientation which this arrangement causes by treating the essays devoted to each country as one unit. Read in this way, the American essays are considerably more satisfactory than the English: they tell a continuous story and, no doubt because of Elizabeth Fee's extensive authorial involvement, share a consistency of style and interpretation which is absent from the chapters about Britain.

The chapters organised by Fee give a comprehensive history of the professional education of public health workers in the United States, from the emergence of the early educational programmes in the universities in the later nineteenth century to the fresh perspectives on the health system dictated by the AIDS epidemic. In addition, we are given insights into the events which shaped the development of the profession: wars, the bacteriological revolution, the epidemiological transition, the introduction of Medicare and Medicaid. The English chapters are less comprehensive: contributions by Dorothy Porter, on the origins of the English medical officers' failure to gain significant power over the development of the public health system, and by Jane Lewis, on the problems of finding a practical philosophy for public health in the twentieth century, outclass Roy Acheson's pedestrian two-part, blow-by-blow, account of the Diploma in Public Health, a qualification which achieved its peak of relevance in 1900.

Differences in emphasis and coverage between the two sets of essays are partly compensated for by the first and last chapters, but also by the identity of themes which run insistently through them both. In neither Britain nor the USA, for example, has public health ever been attractive to medical students as a career, yet schools of public health have continued to court them, since a high degree of involvement of medically qualified personnel is the key to the financial and political recognition of the discipline. The central focus of all the essays is the education of medically qualified public health personnel, its associated problems, and its implications for the function and standing of the discipline in the wider world. Popular health education, a prerequisite for the success of any public health system, is mentioned but not explored: it is peripheral, explains Acheson, to the main theme of the book. At bottom, this