

Book Reviews

by the Group a recognizable pattern of the pre-industrial western European family can be detected. Mr. Laslett's classic paper on the villages of Clayworth and Cogenhoe, where this was first revealed, is here, as is one on long-term trends in bastardy. There are others on parental deprivation, the history of aging and the aged, age of sexual maturity in Europe since the Middle Ages, and the household and family on U.S. slave plantations. Although these articles deal entirely with people, the individuals do not appear through the statistics, and the conclusions are average and impersonal. Nevertheless, this building material will no doubt be fleshed out as historical sociology develops, and in the meantime it should, in addition, be, as Mr. Laslett maintains, useful in the tackling of present-day population problems.

ANGUS McLAREN, *Birth control in nineteenth-century England*, London, Croom Helm, 1977, 8vo, pp. 263, £8.95.

Dr. McLaren's purpose is to define the social and political background to birth control in the nineteenth century. In his deep and scholarly analysis, he first of all discusses the eighteenth-century background to the birth control debate; next, the problem of contraception and the class struggle; third, neo-Malthusianism and its late nineteenth-century critics; and finally the theory and practice of birth control up to 1914.

He declares that throughout the discussion of birth control in the nineteenth century the main problem was "the reproductive behaviour of the working classes in general and women in particular". His book is therefore "a social history of this issue both from above and below".

In all, his excellent study is an outstanding contribution to an issue that today is of central social significance. It can be warmly recommended to a wide audience of experts and lay people.

ANTHONY S. WOHL, *The eternal slum. Housing and social policy in Victorian London*, London, Edward Arnold, 1977, 8vo, pp. xxiv, 386, illus., £15.50.

The publishers claim this book to be "the first full-length study of working-class housing in a British town". The latter is Victorian and Edwardian London, which typifies other British cities, and the evils of urban overcrowding form the central theme. It is a scholarly book, well illustrated with contemporary photographs and drawings, and it represents an important contribution to the social and political history of housing. The author displays wide knowledge of his field and its background, and draws upon a great deal of primary source-material, especially vestry reports. His book provides an excellent account of the appalling conditions under which individuals in the nineteenth century lived, knowledge of which is essential for anyone investigating the medical or social history of British cities. It can be strongly recommended.

JENNI CALDER, *The Victorian home*, London, Batsford, 1977, 4to, pp. 238, illus., £5.50.

The author, a professional writer, gives an excellent account of all aspects of the Victorian home. For many it was a place of peace, order, harmony, and comfort,

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but it also had many shortcomings and variations. These are all discussed in an absorbing story, illustrated profusely with contemporary drawings, paintings, photographs, etc. The country, provincial, and city home, and that of the rich and poor are described, and throughout there is extensive reference to contemporary literature, mainly Dickens, Eliot, the Brontës, Trollope, and Gaskell. Children, housing, home-making, and taste also receive attention. The main defect is the paucity of documentation, so that the book is of little use as a reference work.

Nevertheless, it will be essential reading for anyone dealing with disease in Victorian Britain, and it can be warmly recommended.

FRANK HARRISON, *The dark angel. Aspects of Victorian sexuality*, London, Sheldon Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. xii, 288, £6.50.

The author is a professional writer and he tackles this currently popular theme by discussing three aspects of it: middle-class sexuality, which comprises most of the book; working class sexuality; and prostitution. The fear and shame of sex, blushing, the ignorance of female and male sexuality exhibited by the medical profession, the perpetuation of the patriarchal family state with the suppression of the female, and the way in which painting reflected the latter's emancipation, are some of the main topics dealt with in the first part. In the second section, a graphic account is provided of the living conditions of the poor, the result of which was total celibacy. This part and the third one, however, are by no means as well handled as the first, and, although wide research has no doubt been carried out for the book as a whole, the amount of documentation is small.

IAN SELLERS, *Nineteenth-century nonconformity*, London, Edward Arnold, 1977, 8vo, pp. ix, 102, £2.95 (paperback).

Another title in the excellent series, Foundations of Modern History, this book traces the growth of the English Protestant Dissent, a rise from an alienated and hated minority to a respectable and power group. In so doing the author relates this change accurately and extensively to social and political events. The survival and proliferation of the non-conforming churches is a complex phenomenon, but it is described here lucidly, and the account includes a survey of philanthropic activities. The book deals with yet another aspect of the general Victorian background, a knowledge of which is essential to the historian of nineteenth-century medicine.

EMILY TAFT DOUGLAS, *Pioneer of the future: Margaret Sanger*, Garrett Park, Md., Garrett Park Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. viii, 298, illus., \$8.50 (\$6.95 paperback).

A revised edition of an earlier work, this is an excellent account of Margaret Sanger (1879–1966), who was an early American leader in the women's movement. She founded the first birth control clinic in America and, at the age of seventy-three, the International Planned Parenthood Federation. Her career was tempestuous, and the rewards for her enlightened reforms included eight imprisonments. However, she won her battle to legalize contraception in the U.S.A., and also the support and friendship of H. G. Wells, Havelock Ellis, Julian Huxley, Tagore, and Nehru, amongst others. The book is well written, but, although based on extensive research, there is no documentation of it.