

Book Reviews

growth studies were conducted for humanitarian purposes. Heights and weights of children were measured to provide evidence of poverty, malnutrition, disease, and labour abuse in an attempt to bring about social reforms. The emphasis on social comment is a great strength of this book. The author not only explains what was done and how it was done (details of the methodology are always given where these are known) but also why it was done. The growth studies are all reviewed against the background of social conditions prevailing at the time. They are described in considerable detail with vivid biographical sketches of key personalities. Professor Tanner's personal knowledge of the main instigators and innovators of modern growth studies and techniques, together with his deep personal involvement in human auxology make the final chapters particularly absorbing and informative.

In short, this scholarly work will be regarded as the definitive history of the study of human growth to the 1980s, an indispensable source of reference to human biologists, paediatricians, physical anthropologists, and medical and social historians. Authors planning to write histories of the study of the physiology of growth, many years hence when the topic has reached a suitable state of maturity, could not do better than to emulate Professor Tanner's style, penetration, and method of construction which have been used so effectively in this volume.

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PETA ALLAN and MOYA JOLLEY (editors), *Nursing, midwifery and health visiting since 1900*, London, Faber & Faber, 1982, 8vo, pp. 316, £7.95 (£4.95 paperback).

The title of this book is a misnomer. It is not about the overall development of nursing, but rather nineteen separate essays by twenty-one authors – one chapter of thirteen pages is written by three people – about various aspects of nursing. Some authors take 1900 as a starting-point, others begin earlier, most later. There has been no attempt to integrate the material, and therefore there are gaps and overlaps. For example, many essays refer *en passant* to the Committee on Nursing, but not until the end had the reader any idea of its terms of reference. Nor is the material balanced; thirty-four pages are devoted to nursing in the United States, but there is nothing on nursing in the countries of the European Community or Scandinavia.

Some authors look at the past, but they tend to use the old, well-worn, and sometimes inaccurate, secondary sources. The chapter on pre-1900 is particularly disturbing and the information on Edwin Chadwick and the Morpeth Public Health Act misleading; even the title of Chadwick's report is wrong, and the General Board of Health certainly did not "control local authorities". The old myth is repeated that most nurses were drunken and immoral until 1860, with Sarah Gamp called up as proof, regardless of the fact that Dickens wrote *Martin Chuzzlewit* in 1843 and it is a caricature of London nurses before that time. Abel Smith's work and the fact that some of the first Nightingale pupils were drawn from the existing hospital nurses and were taught by them is ignored. There was no great watershed. Although the Nightingale Fund helped to educate the public on the need for nurses to be trained, it was some years before the first pupils who survived the system made much impact on the nursing scene. Unfortunately the authors seem to have ignored recent historiography, and the chapter on the nineteenth century seems to be based on the Nightingale biography by Cook (1914) to whom some of the material now available was not accessible, and on Lucy Seymer (1932), who based her rather sentimental assessment on Cook and the reformer's own statements.

However, some essays will prove useful sources for nurses seeking information about the present day: C. M. Chapman takes the reader through the intricacies of degrees in nursing; and Professor Hayward through research studies, with masterly clarity. Margaret Green charts the way through the labyrinth of courses for nursing tutors, and Sheila Quinn sets out clearly the international aspects of nursing; particularly commendable is the essay by the late Brian Watkin on 'Nursing and the National Health Service'.

At the end, these remain disparate essays and the reader gets no overall picture of the growth of nursing in the last eighty years; how the different grades grew in terms of numbers; to what

Book Reviews

extent growth was predicated by public demand, the growth of medical knowledge, and changes in education; to what extent nursing was affected by two world wars; and then by opportunities for women elsewhere. What is needed is a pulling-together of the best of the micro-histories and an up-dating of Professor Abel Smith's work.

It is hoped that at reprinting an opportunity will be taken to correct the numerous errors of spelling and proof-reading.

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F. B. SMITH, *Florence Nightingale. Reputation and power*, London, Croom Helm, 1982, 8vo, pp. 216, £12.95.

Professor Smith wastes no time in making his opinion of the subject of this revisionist study clear. "Florence Nightingale's first chance", begins the first sentence of the book's first chapter, "to employ her talent for manipulation came in August, 1853". This is just the beginning. Much of the book is structured around Smith's desire to show that Nightingale was a liar, a careerist, a bully, a callous manipulator of friends, and a barracuda-like enemy; she was, in short, a power-hungry psychopath. She was never much of an administrator, Smith argues, and even less an original thinker. "In this study", he concludes, "I have tried to construe that species of fallacy . . . that doers of good deeds must necessarily be good in themselves". (p. 202). This flat truism serves quite literally as the book's substantive thesis. And I must confess that Smith's lively and even fascinating demolition of Miss Nightingale's moral credentials convinces this reader at least; she may well deserve this portrait in psychopathology.

It is not clear, however, that social and medical historians are deserving of quite the same product. For Professor Smith has done a careful job of research, writes lucidly, is learned and sophisticated; in every chapter (on the Crimea, on India, on nursing, and on sanitary reform in the army) he provides new material – and implies an ability to tell us much more, if he had not been obsessed by dislike for his subject. He knows the secondary literature and the relevant manuscripts, but uses them in large measure to address the question of Nightingale's character and consistency; it is almost as though his negative reaction to Miss Nightingale began to write the book, turning Professor Smith into a kind of retrospective investigative reporter instead of the thoughtful and informed social historian he obviously is. There are, in fact, hints in the text suggesting that this study started as a full-dress biography – which somehow evolved into a series of critical essays on key aspects of Nightingale's career. This reviewer, at least, wishes Smith had written that biography and used Florence Nightingale's career to tell us more about that Victorian England which allowed her to become the Lady with the Lamp. Even as it is, however, Smith's book is a fascinating and indispensable supplement to the still-standard biography by Sir Edward Cook.

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W. D. A. SMITH, *Under the influence. A history of nitrous oxide and oxygen anaesthesia*, London, Macmillan, 1982, 4to, pp. xxix, 188, illus., £12.00.

Dr Smith's book is a collection of thirteen papers originally published in the *British Journal of Anaesthesia* between 1960 and 1972, together with communications to the *British Dental Journal* (1968) and the *University of Leeds Review* (1975). The book represents fifteen years of meticulous, painstaking research. Smith fully covers the whole period from the first discovery of nitrous oxide and oxygen by Joseph Priestley to the attacks upon nitrous oxide launched by Courville, Bedford, and Bourne between 1952 and 1957, and the counter-attacks by Klock, Tom, and Mostert.

The chapters are, broadly speaking, in chronological order, presenting a picture of development from the early "straight gas" to the prolonged "gas and oxygen" of more recent times.