

## Book Reviews

VERN BULLOUGH, BONNIE BULLOUGH, and MARIETTA P. STANTON (eds), *Florence Nightingale and her era: a collection of new scholarship*, New York and London, Garland, 1990, 8vo, pp. xvi. 365, \$50.00.

This volume, by established and new writers on the history of nursing, is the result of a conference held at the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1989. The editors are to be congratulated for the conference itself, and for speedily reproducing a number of papers presented at it. The central theme of the conference and the volume is the life and times of Florence Nightingale, with particular reference to the way her ideas and values were taken up and translated by other nursing leaders and organizations. The final contribution to the volume (a Nightingale bibliography by Bonnie Bullough, Vern Bullough, and Lilli Sentz) illustrates the vast and growing literature on Nightingale and her role in the development of nursing.

The volume is divided into sections, each dealing with an aspect of the concerns and interests that Nightingale scholars have developed. Monica Baly, the foremost Nightingale scholar, examines the usefulness of the Nightingale myths to nursing reformers and to hospital administrators. That theme finds an echo in an important new contribution by Martha Vicinus on Nightingale's use as a role-model for nineteenth century girls, through the many popular "biographies" of Florence Nightingale.

Other contributions link Nightingale scholarship and "nightingaleism" to important contemporary social and political issues, including a reappraisal of the suffrage movement and the attitude of some of the nursing leadership to women's issues. Roberta Tierney identifies the significance of the American Civil War to the development of modern nursing in the USA. Unfortunately, the volume does not contain a similar piece on the impact of war on British nursing, although Anne Summers (1989) has made this an important area of study. It is also gratifying to see that nursing history deals with psychiatric as well as general nursing and education as much as with professionalization.

The volume is, at \$50.00, badly produced and poorly proof-read (one chapter misspells "nursing" throughout the page headings). The typeface and typesetting are not conducive to easy reading. These are minor irritations, given the overall satisfaction of seeing a volume devoted to Nightingale scholarship breaking out of the conventional biographical, or hagiographical, approach.

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W. J. O'CONNOR, *British physiologists 1885–1914: a biographical dictionary*, Manchester University Press, 1991, pp. xviii, 582, £55.00 (0–7190–3282–2).

The second volume of physiological biographies follows the same pattern as the first (see *Med. Hist.*, 1989, 33: 390). Details of the subjects have been extracted mainly from obituary notices in the *British Medical Journal* and similar sources and presented in a very readable, almost conversational, manner. As before, the biographies are grouped geographically (Oxford, Cambridge, London etc.), according to the subject's main affiliation, with subdivisions for the various institutions within each area. There is good cross-referencing to take in moves during a career and the index allows any subject to be found easily. The date 1914 means only that the subject had been identified as a physiologist by that year; thus the careers, and the lives, of the younger ones continued for many years after; for example, Nathan Mutch of Guy's, elected to the Physiological Society in 1912, lived until 1982. In addition to the biographies there are introductory paragraphs outlining the state of physiology at the time and place so that the whole adds up to more than "dictionary" might suggest; it amounts to a summary (but nothing more) of British physiology of the period.

A comparison of this volume with the first shows that physiology had clearly come of age. Although covering only 30 years, compared with the 65 of the previous volume, there are now about 350 subjects compared with only 135, and more of them were full-time physiologists, rather than medical graduates awaiting a clinical appointment. Although the author often refers to "the men", six women merit a biographical entry, compared with only one previously.

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However, considering that Elizabeth Garrett qualified in medicine in 1865 and the University of London opened its doors to women in 1878, it is surprising how few women had taken up physiology by 1914. Only Winifred Cullis at the London School of Medicine for Women had achieved the status of head of a department by that time.

The author has selected his subjects on the ground that they were either members of the Physiological Society, teachers of physiology, or authors of papers in the *Journal of Physiology*. This would appear to be a tightly-knit group, but it does include a number of people who might be surprised to be recognized as physiologists. Many joined the Physiological Society on their first academic appointment and then left or lost interest when their careers took them elsewhere. Thus the connection of some of the subjects with physiology is very tenuous. But one of the purposes of the *Dictionary* is to identify all those who made up British physiology, not just those who are well known today and in this respect the author has been assiduous. The book could have been much shorter had it adopted a more telegraphic style, but the author has been allowed to write as he pleases with the result that the entries for such distinguished physiologists as Bayliss, Haldane, Dale, and Starling, amount to full biographies which may in future be quoted as sources. This freedom also allows him to add many serendipitous remarks which add greatly to the enjoyment of the book: McMunn's brother-in-law was Captain Webb, the Channel swimmer; H. R. Dean, a man of substance at the London Hospital, used gold-plated Spencer-wells forceps; A. E. Garrod had a street named after him in Aix-les-Bains; Noel Paton's father was the Queen's limner for Scotland.

At £55 only dedicated physiological historians will buy their own copy but, nevertheless, it will become an essential source book for many who want to look up the history of their department or to know something of former workers in their own subject. Apart from the author's use of the term "Vivisection Act" for the Cruelty to Animals Act (the distinction is important) there are very few misprints or mistakes.

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**RICHARD B. WELBOURN**, *The history of endocrine surgery*, with contributions by Stanley R. Friesen, Ivan D. A. Johnston, and Ronald A. Sellwood, New York, Praeger, 1990, 8vo, pp. xix, 385, illus., £52.50.

Endocrine surgery is not the easiest of subjects for historical study, but Richard Welbourn—a retired Professor of Surgical Endocrinology at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School—is well qualified to attempt it; and he has enlisted an Anglo-American team of specialists to assist him with some of the obscurer topics. But the subject remains obstinately untidy, and it is probably inevitable that, after the familiar organs have been dealt with in orthodox fashion, his book should end with a nondescript flurry of pluriglandular and para-endocrine syndromes. By the use of a particularly neat system of numbered paragraphs and frequent cross-referencing, Welbourn has largely succeeded in pulling these miscellaneous topics together into a more or less coherent whole. But it does seem a bit odd that he could not find "time or space" to include a chapter on the gonads, surely the father and mother—in a historical sense—of the whole endocrine system.

It can be said at once that this is an exceptionally well-crafted account of how leading surgeons have progressively improved the understanding and treatment of endocrine disorders, and on its own terms it would indeed be difficult to fault. These terms, however, are somewhat restricted for a book claiming to describe the history of a whole branch of medicine or surgery. For it is exclusively concerned with the doings of the small band of particularly able surgeons who have specialized in this field. Welbourn justifies this narrow focus by quoting Thomas Carlyle's well-known dictum that history is the biography of great men; and no one would deny its applicability to the history of medicine and surgery. But in another context Carlyle wrote that "history is the essence of innumerable biographies", and that apparently contradictory remark is also relevant to medical history. Great discoveries are made by great men; but to be of any use to mankind they have to be applied by a host of lesser practitioners. So it is not