

Book Reviews

MARCEL FLORKIN, *A history of biochemistry. Part III. History of the identification of the sources of free energy in organisms*, Amsterdam, Elsevier Scientific Publishing Co., 1975, 8vo, pp. [xxi], 475, illus., Dfl. 130.00. (\$54.25).

Professor Florkin and Professor Elmer H. Stotz are editors of *Comprehensive biochemistry*, a 33-volume work still being published. This is volume 31 and the second of four projected volumes on the history of biochemistry; Volume 30 contained Part I. 'Proto-biochemistry' and Part II. 'From proto-biochemistry to biochemistry'. Part III is concerned with the three main sources of free energy in biological systems: photo-phosphorylation, intramolecular oxidation, and oxidative phosphorylation. Only the second of these may be said to be understood, whilst the others remain unsolved problems.

After a useful introduction, the book divides into three sections: I. Anaerobic phosphorylation (Chapters 17 to 25); II. Aerobic phosphorylation (Chapters 26–37); III. Autotrophic phosphorylations (Chapters 38 to 39). Most of the material is from the present century, representing for the most part the classical period of biochemistry, and as we progress nearer to the present day the more technical it becomes. Thus, some knowledge of modern biochemistry is needed in order to comprehend the arguments and interpretations which led to advances. The outstanding pioneers of biochemistry play a major role: Gowland Hopkins, Meyerhof, the Coris, the Needhams, Warburg, Keilin, Szent-Györgyi, Krebs, and Peters, amongst others; there are altogether fifty-six excellent portraits. Documentation throughout is impeccable, and the author's style prevents the book from degenerating into a review of the literature, which could readily happen with the kind of data he is handling.

This further volume of Professor Florkin's history of biochemistry indicates that it, and presumably the remaining volumes, are intended for the biochemist rather than the historian of medicine. It is essential that this kind of history should be recorded and Professor Florkin must be congratulated for the excellence of his work so far. It will be for some years the definitive source, although it is hoped that from it a less technical survey, linking perhaps more closely with other parts of the medical sciences, will be distilled.

ELSPETH HUXLEY, *Florence Nightingale*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975, 4to, pp. 254, illus., £4.95.

It is not altogether clear why another book on Florence Nightingale was thought to be necessary at this time. Mrs. Huxley covers exactly the same ground as previous biographies, although she does pay more attention than some writers to Miss Nightingale's contradictory personality and remarkable ability in a number of fields of endeavour. In addition her book is richly illustrated with sixteen pages of colour plates and nearly one hundred pictures, depicting all aspects of Miss Nightingale's unusual career.

No new material has been used, for there has not been much available. However, when the calendar of Florence Nightingale's letters appears in the near future a considerable amount of previously unpublished data will be released, and yet another biography will be needed. Until then Mrs. Huxley's book can be recommended as an accurate and unbiased account intended for the layman.