

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