

## Book Reviews

ELIZABETH SMITH, *A woman with a purpose. The diaries of Elizabeth Smith 1872–1884*, edited by Veronica Strong-Boag, Toronto and London, University of Toronto Press, 1980, 8vo, pp. xxxviii, 298, illus., \$25.00 (\$10.00 paperback).

The evangelical rationale for feminism and for women practising medicine goes back to the late eighteenth century: evangelism was transmuted into Victorianism. The inspiration for Elizabeth Blackwell's symbolic opening of the allopathic medical profession to women lay in the 1845 suggestion of a dying female friend: "If I could have been treated by a lady doctor, my worst sufferings could have been spared me." By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, middle-class women were successfully challenging the male monopoly of medical education in Europe, North America, and related cultures. Their temporary success was due to the association of their challenge with orthodox, "Victorian" values.

Elizabeth Smith (1859–1949), schoolteacher, medical student (the first half of the diaries describe the former phase, the second the latter), practising physician, medical lecturer, leader in moral reform, and in movements for mental hygiene and mothers' pensions, illustrates this association. She was one of the first three women to graduate from a Canadian medical school, in 1884. On entering the Kingston Medical School, Queens University, Smith and her two fellow female students presciently named themselves Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Before graduating, they had faced a "furnace" of hostile male students capitalizing with "vulgar levity" on the exposure of women to physiology: the same Victorian values justifying women's medical education could be used to reduce it to a segregated, inferior process. Smith gave up her medical career in 1893 to devote herself to marriage, childrearing, and volunteer work. Simply graduation from medical school followed by motherhood had always been her goals. Her diaries testify to both an intense ambition of the kind Smith herself associated with the self-made man *and* to her desire to exemplify Protestant womanhood.

The diary entries published in this version are sixty per cent of the manuscript at the University of Waterloo. According to the editor, Veronica Strong-Boag, the remainder consists of "repetitious passages, many of them devoted to religion and social chit-chat and several of the poems . . .". She divides the text into ten sections and provides a sensible introduction to Smith's life and Canadian women's struggle to enter medicine. Footnotes in the text are sparse and Smith's most intriguing and difficult references and quotations are left unidentified. Nonetheless, these diary extracts are of considerable value to social historians generally, as well as to historians of feminism, education, and medicine.

G. J. Barker-Benfield

Associate Professor of History  
State University of New York at Albany

INNES H. PEARSE, *The quality of life. The Peckham approach to human ethology*. Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press, 1979, 8vo, pp. xvi, 194, illus., £6.50.

Innes Pearse's book is very much a personal reminiscence of the two decades' existence of the pioneer experiment in human ethology, supplementing the previous