

Book Reviews

ROGER MANVELL, *The trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh*, London, Elek, 1976, 8vo, pp. xi, 182, £5.95.

One of the celebrated nineteenth-century trials was *The Queen v. Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant* in 1876. As free-thinkers they had re-published a forty-year-old pamphlet advocating contraception within marriage and were indicted the following year for having issued an "obscene libel".

Much has been written on this episode and the main participants, but Mr. Manvell, a professional biographer, concentrates on the verbatim transcript of the trial (pp. 61–156), which was published in 1877. He uses the episode as a barometer of Victorian opinion regarding contraception and other matters of sex, and accurately sets the scene leading up to it and the aftermath. The moral conventions and susceptibilities of the time are well portrayed, and, as the author suggests, the whole event is reminiscent of the 1960 hearing of the prosecution of the publishers of *Lady Chatterley's lover*. In each case the legal proceedings helped to unfetter the British press.

This book is a useful addition to the elucidation of a facet of Victorian society, as well as a further consideration of a fascinating reformer, Annie Besant (1847–1933).

MARIE BAROVIC ROSENBERG and LEN V. BERGSTROM (compilers), *Women and society. A critical review of the literature with a selected annotated bibliography*, Beverly Hills and London, Sage Publications, 1975, 8vo, pp. [3. 11], 354, £11.00.

The editors recognize the inadequacies of their bibliography, and these are especially revealing in the section on 'Women in medicine and health' (pp. 191–197). The selection of titles is very curious for they range from Packard's *History of medicine in the U.S.* (1931) to equally antiquated articles on menstruation and reproductive physiology, such as 'The hormonal causes of premenstrual tension' (1931) and 'The relations of pelvic and nervous diseases' (1898). There is a preponderance of psychiatry and psychoanalysis, although there is another section longer than this one (pp. 232–239) on 'Women in psychology'. Paradoxically enough, the items are almost all in English and from American sources, despite the fact that at least one of the editors is said to have outstanding linguistic prowess, for ". . . he speaks five languages fluently, including Chinese and Japanese". The brief annotations are by no means "critical" as the book's title would suggest and the list of "Errata" does not inspire confidence in the book's accuracy.

To whom this section is directed is not at all clear, but in any case its value is very limited. Other parts may be better, but again there is a high proportion of American sources, and there is little of value to those concerned with the medical aspects of women and feminism.

MARY CATHCART BORER, *Willingly to school. A history of women's education*, Guildford and London, Lutterworth, 1976, 8vo, pp. 319, illus., £5.95.

In view of the utter liberation of women now upon us, it is of considerable interest to have a book which traces the provision, or lack of provision, for their education from Anglo-Saxon England of the seventh century A.D. to the present day. The essential questions asked over the centuries have been, should girls as well as boys receive

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education?: if so, should it be the same? Each generation has reacted differently to these queries, and it is the detailed answers to them that make up this book. The problem of whether girls have the same or different intellectual and imaginative capabilities as boys is a more difficult one and has yet to be solved. The education of famous women is also examined here, and the foundation of schools for girls is followed closely. These events are related against a background of general history and the climate of opinion of the time.

A considerable amount of research has gone into this book, but there are no references or notes, and only a brief list of 'Books consulted'. Nevertheless it will be useful to those tracing the history of women in medicine or of the female patient.

DAVID M. VESS, *Medical revolution in France 1789–1796*, Gainesville, Fla., University Press of Florida, 1975, 8vo, pp. [2 11.], 216, \$12.00.

When French medicine was revolutionized in the aftermath of the Revolution, it led the world into the dawn of modern scientific medicine. A lot is known of the outcome, for example of the Paris school of clinico-pathological correlation, but information on the earliest years of the changes has not been extensive. Professor Vess here provides us with a considerable amount of this information so that we can understand and evaluate a period that was crucial not only for France but also for the rest of the world. His deep knowledge of the general scene allows him to depict the medical situations and events in accurate perspective. As might be expected, there is a good deal on battlefield medicine, and this is handled adequately and skilfully.

However, Professor Vess is less at home in the pre- and post-revolutionary periods. His account of the former is often faulty and his assumptions in the latter concerning the influence of war on medicine are not wholly acceptable. Nevertheless his book is a scholarly contribution to one of the most exciting and influential periods in all of medical history, which others may be inspired to investigate further.

GWYNNE VEVERS (compiler), *London's Zoo. An anthology to celebrate 150 years of the Zoological Society of London*, London, Bodley Head, 1976, 8vo, pp. 159, illus., £4.95.

Dr. Vevers, whose father was Superintendent of the Society from 1923 to 1948, has sifted through contemporary press-cuttings, hitherto unpublished records of the Society, its Annual Reports, literature and letters to produce this anthology. The resultant quotations, reports, anecdotes and accounts make fascinating reading, and they highlight all aspects of the Society and its Zoo during the last century and a half; the Whipsnade collections as well as those in Regent's Park are included.

Whilst enjoying this book, we also learn a great deal about animals and their life in a zoological garden. In addition, public opinion about them and its vicissitudes during the 150 years are revealed. The only criticisms are that the book could have been longer, and more precise references to the origins of the selections could have been given. It remains a mystery why anthologists, having spent time and labour locating and transcribing the chosen piece, do not expend a few more seconds to record, for example, the page or pages of the book where it occurs. Annotations of the entries would also have increased the value of this work.