

### Book Reviews

much of what has been written in English on the history of psychiatry, so that the tyro might easily conclude that before Freud little real comprehension of psychiatry existed. The unconscious, and dynamic psychiatry has received far too much emphasis, and as for Freud, surely few physicians in the history of medicine have been the subject of such intensive, some might say excessive, study. The result has been that for some of us a slight sinking feeling at the pit of the stomach takes place on being confronted with yet another book on the history of dynamic psychiatry. I must confess that this was my reaction to what seemed a formidable tome to review. In the event, reading this book has been a labour of love, an experience which has left a deep sense of admiration for what is undoubtedly a 'tour de force'. Professor Ellenberger starts with an advantage few possess, a truly cosmopolitan background. Born in South Africa as a Swiss citizen, he was educated in German-speaking Switzerland, studied medicine in France and Switzerland, practised psychiatry in the United States and finally went to Montreal, where he is Professor of Criminology in the Université de Montréal. As a result his sources are far wider than is usual—his command of a truly remarkable bibliography can only be described as masterly. It must be said, however churlish one may feel in the saying, that it is somewhat strange how little attention he has paid to the important work carried out by the British school—Laycock receives no mention, for instance, and perhaps less than justice is done to Braid, Elliotson and the history of the mesmeric movement in England, as well as to the influence of Hughlings Jackson and Herbert Spencer. But no author is ever perfect, and the riches we are presented with more than make up for the omission. This absorbing story is told so very well—the characters, doctors, patients, literary men, come alive—they are living people, living in a skilfully recreated contemporary world. According to Ellenberger, the role of what he calls 'creative illness' has played a considerable part in the development of dynamic psychiatry, Mesmer, Freud and Jung and Adler, all experiencing this rare condition out of which came a new awareness of mental processes. Particular doctor-patient relationships too have exerted a profound influence on theories of psychopathology—Mesmer's patient, Maria Theresia Paradis, Breuer's Anna O, Janet's Leonie, Freud's Elisabeth von R-, all hold an honoured place in this truly remarkable history. We shall not see the like of this book for many many years to come. The production matches the content, and the price is by no means excessive.

DENIS LEIGH

*A Short History of the Radcliffe Infirmary*, by A. H. T. ROBB-SMITH, Oxford, The Church Army Press for the United Oxford Hospitals, 1970, pp. 233, £1·00.

The Radcliffe Infirmary has been fortunate in its historian. Dr. Robb-Smith makes plain his love for the place and has adopted a style reminiscent of John Aubrey. Acknowledging his debt to A. G. Gibson for the early years, he has surrounded the dates, the names and the facts with enlightening gossip which gains rather than loses by not being always germane to the Infirmary. The reader is carried along, although swept along would in places more accurately describe the sensation, in a breathless tide of reminiscence, comment and whimsy. The whole effect is enchanting and the reader need not be an Oxford man nor a Radcliffe addict to be enchanted, although for such the pleasure must be all the greater. Beginning in that first English age of

### Book Reviews

lay compassion, the end of the eighteenth century, the hospital's ups and downs are faithfully recorded, and due praise is given to the long and varied procession of benefactors from John Radcliffe to Nuffield. Oxford, known as the home of lost causes, has certainly provided two wonderful exceptions in life-saving penicillin, first used on humans at the Radcliffe, and the life-preventing and life-enhancing contraceptive, Volpar. Dr. Robb-Smith writes that 'for the more recent period I have relied to some extent on my own memories and those of my friends'. Posterity, as well as contemporaries, will be grateful for the chance to have the contents of such excellent memories so industriously and happily recounted.

A. W. FRANKLIN

(1) *Volksmedizinisch-geburtshilfliche Aufzeichnungen aus dem Lötschental*, by CARL MUELLER (Berner Beiträge zur Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften N. F. Band 3), Berne, H. Huber, 1969, pp. 144, map and plates, S.Fr. 1, DM. 18.–

(2) *Hundert Jahre Geburtshilfe und Gynäkologie in Basel, 1868–1968*, edited by TH. KOLLER, H. STAMM and K. STAEUBLE, Basle, Schwabe, 1970, pp. 436, S.Fr. 60.

(1) The Lötschental is a valley in the Swiss district of Wallis. In 1950 it had 1,405 inhabitants, considerably less than in the past. Cut off by mountains from the rest of the world its medical practices are a law to themselves. There had not been a resident physician in the Lötschen valley until 1930, and there is only one today. The birth of babies was assisted by lay women. When complications were expected pregnant women were, shortly before giving birth, taken to the Rhone valley but often they had to walk there. In winter, with the constant threat of avalanches, all childbirths had to take place on the spot. Even caesarean sections were performed by unqualified and untrained persons.

The well-chosen photographs show such things as a rope hanging from the ceiling which the woman can hold on to while giving birth. Most of the information on actual practice, the same throughout the centuries, comes from conversations and visits to patients with Marjosa Tannast, the old midwife without a diploma but with a long memory and an amazing amount of common sense. Each incident is led up to by comparison with primitive customs in other parts of the world and parallels from 'civilized' obstetric history. The general picture is by no means idyllic. Yet the greatest happiness for every Lötschental woman is to have a large number of healthy children. This ethic can perhaps be understood when one considers that the punishment for artificially induced abortion (p. 25) has been (or still is?) between five and twelve years of penal servitude.

(2) This opulent volume is adorned with a number of illustrations of medico-historical interest, besides portraits and facsimiles. It begins with a historical section on the city of Basle, continues with a chapter on buildings and administration, and then follows the medico-historical section and a clinical section. Heinrich Buess is the author of the medico-historical part. He deals with the most important personalities: Felix Platter (1536–1614), who was not a mere theoretician, but practised in spite of the prevalent prejudice against male obstetricians; Johann Jakob Bischoff (1841–92), Hermann Fehling (1847–1925), Ernst Bumm (1858–1925), Otto von Herff (1856–1916) and Alfred Labhardt (1874–1949); the first five heads of the Bürgerspital