

Book Reviews

Mr. Cohn has attempted to be objective and has obviously researched his subject extensively.

There is no doubt that Sister Kenny's successes were in part due to her therapeutic aggressiveness, but her relatively simple methods have, nevertheless, proved effective in the reduction of paralysis and contractures and are certainly preferable to the previous custom of immobilization. As a balanced survey of a remarkable woman crusader and for insights into American medicine in the 1940s, this book can be warmly recommended.

JEAN DONNISON, *Midwives and medical men. A history of inter-professional rivalries and women's rights*, London, Heinemann, 1977, 8vo, pp. vi, 250, illus., £6.50.

At the present time the profession of midwife is becoming obsolete, especially in the United States, a diminution of usefulness which began in the seventeenth century. Prior to that, child-birth had been strictly a woman's business, but gradually male attendants displaced her and in the mid-nineteenth century the female monopoly seemed to be set for extinction. However, in the second half of the century there was a revival of the midwife, and today there are indications that she may again play a more important role. This is due partly to feminist agitation and the benefits of home delivery, but the psychological advantages said to accrue for the baby cannot be taken seriously.

This scholarly book, which derives from a thesis compiled by a teacher of social administration, surveys the changing scene chronologically, ending with the Midwives Act of 1902 and valuable 'Conclusions', which include a discussion of present-day problems. Accounts of situations in continental countries would have added depth and perspective and increased the worth of the book without adding greatly to its size. Nevertheless, the work will be of considerable interest to a wide circle of individuals involved with obstetrics, as well as to the historian of medicine.

ALFRED DOUGLAS, *Extra-sensory powers. A century of psychical research*, London, Gollancz, 1976, 8vo, pp. 392, illus., £6.95.

The evidence put forward so far in support of extra-sensory perception is as extensive as it is varied, and the author, a writer, presents a survey of it in a clear, objective and well-documented manner.

The first part deals with 'The dawn of psychical research', beginning with the Ancient World and including Greatrakes, Swedenborg, Wesley, and Mesmer. The spiritualistic movement emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century, and in the 1870s organized studies led to the foundation in 1882 of the Society for Psychical Research in London. The second part describes the various mediums and the major investigations carried out on them. Finally there is the beginning of the era of psychical research in the laboratory, the most famous being experimentalist J. B. Rhine at Duke University, whose work is being carefully assessed by Dr. S. Mauskopf, not referred to here. The book closes with 'Present trends in para-psychology'.

Mr. Douglas has presented a complex subject lucidly and without bias. His survey

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is based on a detailed review of primary material, but he could have cited more secondary sources, which he no doubt consulted, especially when dealing with the earlier periods. The opinion arising from his study is that parapsychology has not been proven, and he concludes with a chapter on psychical research today. It is now becoming a more respectable subject for investigation and this augers well for future work on a topic that is of increasing public and scientific interest.

STEVEN R. HIRSCH and MICHAEL SHEPHERD (editors), *Themes and variations in European psychiatry. An anthology*, Bristol, John Wright, 1974, 8vo, pp. xii, 456, illus., [no price stated].

The comparative insularity of British and American medicine is well known. In the history of psychiatry this is particularly disturbing as many of its basic concepts were published in languages other than English and some have never been adequately translated. The editors, therefore, bring together in this book eighteen important, non-English essays: ten from Germany; five from France; and one each from Denmark, Norway and Sweden. They include such authors as Kraepelin, Jaspers, Ganser, Kretschmer, Kleist, and Dupré, and range in time from 1882 to 1969. All but three have not appeared before in English. Each has a brief introduction, in some instances written by a person familiar with the author.

Together they illustrate the approach of earlier clinical observers to issues which still pose major theoretical problems today and the editors' general aim is ". . . to illustrate the breadth and depth of mainstream psychiatric ideas on the European mainland . . ." (p. vi). In this they are entirely successful and they provide us with a book which should be read by all practising psychiatrists, as well as by those interested in the history of their discipline. Similar collections of readings are urgently needed in other parts of medicine, both clinical and non-clinical, where neglect of material not written in English is equally common. Admittedly some anthologies already exist, but so often English pieces predominate, not on account of the prowess of English-speaking doctors, but more because they do not need to be translated.

FELIX GILBERT, *History: choice and commitment*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. viii, 549, £12.65.

The author is one of America's most outstanding historians and is Professor Emeritus of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton. He has written on the art of diplomacy, the craft of history, pre-modern and modern Europe, and this book contains nineteen of his more important essays. His span of interest and specialization is greater than many historians, for he is equally at home with the Renaissance as with the 1930s. He is concerned basically with the activities of the individual, who must make a choice and a commitment. This for Gilbert is the stuff of history, and his works here are ample demonstration of this attitude. The medical historian will be interested in the more general essays on historians and history, but will benefit from all of them by observing the mode of presentation, the scholarship, and the techniques of a masterly craftsman.