

Book Reviews

history, the constant use of 'Willie' in what is after all an historical biography must seem incongruous and jarring. The index might well have been fuller. Did Lane really write 'Eiselberg' (twice on p. 109)?

The author deserves our gratitude for this intimate and colourful story of a great and controversial personality. It is a worthy addition to Livingstone's well-known series of 'Notable Historical Biographies'.

W. R. BETT

The Psychology of Insanity. BERNARD HART, M.D., F.R.C.P. London: Cambridge University Press. 5th ed. 1957. Pp. xi+127. 10s. 6d.

Since 1912 when this book was first published it has gone into five editions and been reprinted fifteen times. There has been little alteration over the years, and the text stands today much as it was written in 1912. It is a tribute to Dr. Bernard Hart that his book stands up so well to the present day enormous competition from other popular works on psychiatry. Clear, concise, the book deals with psychological mechanisms and their disturbances in a disarmingly simple way. There is a brief chapter on the history of mental disorder, but it is the book itself which is of historical interest. There are few fields of medicine in which a book written in 1912 and remaining substantially unchanged can be read today in a current edition. Perhaps this is an index either of our lack of progress in psychiatry, or of the undoubted validity of the mental mechanisms so ably described by Dr. Hart. Whatever the case the book is undoubtedly a classic, and will continue to be read for many years to come.

DENIS LEIGH

The Quicksilver Doctor. The Life and Times of Thomas Dover, Physician and Adventurer. KENNETH DEWHURST. Bristol: John Wright & Sons Ltd., 1957. Pp. ix+192. Illustrated. 21s.

Thomas Dover is remembered today because a prescription he originally intended to relieve the pain of gout chanced to be a valuable diaphoretic. As such it finds a place even in modern pharmacopoeias, strangely sandwiched between synthetic chemicals.

Dover himself never anticipated that his powder would bring him immortality. The legacy he believed he would leave to medicine was a knowledge of the therapeutic value of crude mercury. This he prescribed in the treatment of intestinal infestation, scrofula, infertility, asthma, syphilis, elephantiasis, scorbutic ulcers, intestinal obstruction and even appendicitis. Little wonder that his contemporaries nicknamed him 'the quicksilver doctor'. A title of which he was very proud.