

Book Reviews

GEORGE PICKERING, *Creative malady. Illness in the lives and minds of Charles Darwin, Florence Nightingale, Mary Baker Eddy, Sigmund Freud, Marcel Proust, Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1974, 8vo., pp. 327, illus., £5.25.

Professor Sir George Pickering explores the fascinating paradox of illness as a benefit, not only to the patient, but also to society. Thus, in the case of certain creative individuals psychoneurotic disorders contribute to their creativity, and he selects six main examples, as well as mentioning others. In some, the illness served as a protection from society and a means of devoting themselves to their life-work. This was the case with Darwin, and also with Florence Nightingale, who for the last fifty-three years of her life was a bed-bound recluse, from which advantageous position she could conduct her campaigns, to the benefit of society. On the other hand, Sir George excludes Elizabeth Browning from this class of individuals, although his opinion could be refuted. Proust, Mary Baker Eddy and Freud are in another category. Their creativity provided them with a cathartic self-cure for their neuroses, and so *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Christian Science, and psychoanalysis, respectively, came into being. It is argued that creativity has its origins in conflict and no doubt this is so, but not in all cases. Somatic or mental illness need not be present, and it can be removed by means other than the catharsis of creativity.

Altogether, this is a stimulating and provoking book, which points the way to further research into the phenomenon of creativity itself, not only as a constructive process as illustrated here, but also as an activity employing analysis, synthesis, integration and the other mental processes of genius in the sciences and arts. Other pathological stimuli as well as disease, such as the intermittent exhibition of alcohol or other drugs, would also have to be taken into account.

JOHN WOODWARD, *To do the sick no harm. A study of the British voluntary hospital system to 1875*, London and Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974, 8vo., pp. xii, 221, £5.50.

Reviewed by Edwin Clarke M.D., F.R.C.P., The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BP.

The author, a social and economic historian, studies the contribution made by the general voluntary hospitals of Britain to the health of the community up to the Public Health Act of 1875. They date from the early eighteenth century, being a direct result of a philanthropic movement inspired by the Enlightenment. First of all, the political and economic motives behind this process are examined, and the work then focuses upon the patient, and administrative matters such as staffing and admissions as they concerned him, are first dealt with. Looking more closely, three factors that determined the hospital patient's survival are identified and analysed: the policy concerning the admission or non-admission of patients suffering from fever; the amount of surgery practised and its varieties; the incidence of diseases specific to hospitals, such as hospital fever, hospital gangrene and others, which were especially rife in the period 1800 to the late 1860s when Lister's principles were becoming known. From these considerations Mr. Woodward contends that, contrary to the usual opinion, the voluntary hospitals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

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had a respectable record of success, as reflected in a mortality rate of under ten per cent. This conclusion, based as it is on a careful examination of hospital records, some of which are presented here in appendices, is of considerable importance because most authorities have claimed the reverse to be the case, in that hospitals contributed to mortality and that they represented "gateways to death".

The main criticism concerns the author's lack of medical knowledge, which, although not influencing his overall conclusions, is evident in the chapters dealing with the clinical aspects of patients. Thus in that devoted to hospital surgery he is able only to present statistics and cite from contemporary authors, but can offer no criticism, interpretation or opinion. On the whole there are too many quotations in this book. Another fault is that although documentation of the primary data is excellent and primary sources in profusion are employed, there is not sufficient reference made to the secondary literature. Thus when the incidence and distribution of bladder stone is being discussed, for example, recent and relevant historical work on this topic is not mentioned. The book's title also is unsatisfactory, because without the sub-title it is meaningless.

Nevertheless, this book is an important addition to the history of medicine and typical of the kind of study that, hopefully, will become commoner. Medical historians need the expert help of the general, social and economic historian to study areas where they lack special knowledge and skills. Each must recognize his own limitations, however, and a closer symbiosis of the two groups should obviate the type of criticisms mentioned above.

D. W. FORREST, *Francis Galton; the life and work of a Victorian genius*, London, P. Elek, 1974, 8vo., pp. xi, 340, illus., £5.50.

If important contributions to a very wide variety of intellectual activities is a measure of a genius, Galton certainly qualifies for this epithet. He worked in anthropology, anthropometrics, criminology (finger-prints), currency reform (decimalization very similar to ours today), geography (the stereoscopic map), meteorology (the anticyclone, his own term), photography (composite photographs), psychology (twin studies and I.Q.), and sociology. He was also a gifted inventor (Galton whistle, telotype which lead to the telex, rotary steam engines, etc.), as well carrying out significant African explorations. However, he is remembered today particularly for his application of statistics to the study of heredity and for the subject he established, eugenics, the name also being his. He was a compulsive measurer and measured everything from human physique to mental ability and the efficacy of prayer. By investigating word associations and the theory of the unconscious he preceded Freud, who was thereby indebted to him.

But Galton had the mind of a mathematician and statistician so that he lacked imagination and sympathy, and some of his eugenic principles, whereby, for example, the mentally superior were to prosper at the expense of the less gifted in order to improve the race, were quite impracticable.

Galton's social background was equally significant, and outstanding individuals such as Charles Darwin (cousin), Josephine Butler (sister-in-law), Florence Nightingale, George Eliot and many more were part of it. Professor D. W. Forrest, who holds