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fashionable at the time. The process is unconscious as each medical theorist is convinced he has at last found the real basis of the symptoms characterizing such diseases as *melancholia* in antiquity. This disease persists right through the Middle Age and the Renaissance but during the seventeenth and eighteenth century is slowly displaced by *hypochondria* which, until then, had meant something different. In the nineteenth century *hypochondria* is superseded by *spinal irritation*, *neurasthenia* and *hysteria*, which latter has quite a history of its own. *Hypochondria* slowly turns into *nosophobia*, the fear of diseases, which since Bleuler in 1916 has ceased to be disease and has become an attitude of mind. *Neurasthenia* turned in the twentieth century into *neurosis*. Dr. Fischer-Homberger omitted to mention that *spinal irritation*, too, lives on as a 'slipped disc'.

Far from being a mere exercise in semantics, though this is a fascinating aspect of it, this book represents a thoroughgoing, abundantly documented treatment of the subject. We hear what Homer, Hippocrates and Galen meant by *kholos*, *khole*, *khondros* and *hypokhondria*. Robert Burton regards *hypochondria* as the most unpleasant form of *melancholia*. Thomas Bartholin, when dissecting, finds that there is no duct from the spleen into the stomach that could carry black bile. J. J. Waldschmidt (1644–89) finds that black bile is altogether non-existent.

The whole thorny question of the nature of mental diseases and their interaction with the body is involved here, including the history of the idea of the 'soul' in medicine. Dr. Fischer-Homberger remains a sceptic from start to finish and never falls into the error of Goethe's Wagner who boasts 'how wonderfully far we have progressed'.

MARIANNE WINDER

*Observations on Midwifery*, by PERCIVALL WILLUGHBY, facsimile of 1863 ed., with a new introduction by J. L. Thornton, Wakefield, Yorks., S. R. Publishers Ltd., 1972, pp. xvii, 345, £3.50.

Make haste to obtain a copy of this little masterpiece whilst stocks last for it is a book to possess rather than to borrow. The reprint of Willughby's *Observations in Midwifery* has been delayed for too long and Mr. J. L. Thornton earns our gratitude for making good this defect; for now is made available a clear concise account of the practice of midwifery in England before the use of the obstetric forceps. As such it is of absorbing interest to medical historians, obstetricians, midwives and particularly to teachers of midwives.

The Introduction to this reprint gives Mr. Thornton the opportunity to give a scholarly account of the manuscripts of Willughby's work, the earliest known being Sloane MS. 529 in the British Museum. A translation in Dutch was printed in 1754 together with some writings of the Chamberlen family, possibly because they both described the use of the lever. Henry Blenkinsop purchased a copy of the manuscript in 1845 and it was not until 1863 that he printed his edition of Willughby's *Observations*, limited to one hundred copies only. The work has been out of print until the publication of the edition now under review.

Percivall Willughby (1596–1635), the sixth son of Sir Percivall Willughby, was educated at Rugby, Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford, and then apprenticed to a barber surgeon. In 1631 he married one of the daughters of Sir Edward Coke and

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practised in Derby, then in Stafford and in 1656 he moved to London for the better education of his children. One of his sons helped him in his practice and one of his daughters became a midwife, attending her own cases and also working with her father.

This book is first and foremost a practical work for the midwife. Willughby starts by admitting that he has no new practice of midwifery, he intends 'to inform the ignorant common midwives with such wayes as I have used with good successe. My thoughts bee onely for a publick good, and chiefly to benefit my own nation, and the midwives inhabiting England'. He was concerned to see the results of bad, rough and ready midwifery and taught that midwives must be discreet in what they said to the patient, to be gentle in their handling of the woman in labour and to let nature alone—'The womb is a place locked up. Let midwives so deale with their travailing women, so will the birth be more easy, and the child not pulled to pieces, or destroyed, nor the woman torn, or ruined by the midwife's struglings, or stretching of their bodies. In fitting time, nature will open the womb.'

In this volume the *Observations in Midwifery* comprises some three hundred pages with an index. There follows, also by Percivall Willughby, forty-five pages of an opusculum (or little work) for the Countrey Midwife which is in some respects of greater interest than the main work for it is packed full of intensely practical advice 'shewing the wayes how to deliver any difficult birth bee it naturall or unnaturall' and ending with a condemnation of Caesarean Section.

The book is printed and bound most admirably and is cheap at £3.50. It would make an ideal gift for any medical man or midwife. Congratulations to all concerned in its production.

J. S. TOMKINSON

*The Falling Sickness: A History of Epilepsy from the Greeks to the Beginnings of Modern Neurology*, by OWSEI TEMKIN, 2nd ed. rev., Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins Press, 1971, pp. xv, 467, illus., £7.15.

A satisfying way of becoming familiar with the changing concepts of medicine is to study the history of a single disease, written by a master. Then all the thoughts and theories which often seem so disembodied in general textbooks of medical history, take on a reality in having to relate them to the subject in hand. Apart from its undoubted value to the specialist in the history of neurology and psychiatry, Owsei Temkin's classic on *The Falling Sickness* provides such a background for the more general student.

Originally written some twenty-five years ago, Professor Temkin has now produced a revised second edition. Epilepsy is a startling phenomenon, which has attracted attention since antiquity. The complexity of its history is daunting, but the student is guided through the concepts of the disease from the fourth century before to the end of the nineteenth century after Christ; from Hippocrates to Hughlings Jackson; from the Sacred Disease to the differential diagnosis of Idiopathic Epilepsy. The detail and the extensive references neither confuse nor intrude upon the easily read text. Not only are the theological, philosophical and social aspects fully discussed, but the clinician is delighted to find such practical, contemporary glimpses as Morel reporting in 1872