

Book Reviews

healing was the fifteenth textbook; the sixteenth (last book of the *Summaria*) was Galen's *On the method of the preservation of health*.

JOHN G. HOWELLS (editor), *World history of psychiatry*, London, Baillière Tindall, 1975, 8vo, pp. xxv, 770, illus., £14.50.

No matter what the field of endeavour, it is always salutary and usually profitable to find out how others, faced with similar situations, have fared in the evolution of the same subject. Dr. Howells, psychiatrist at the Institute of Family Psychiatry, The Ipswich Hospital, has attempted to do this for psychiatry by bringing together twenty-nine essays on the development of the subject in thirty-five countries or areas, including Ancient Greece and Rome and ancient and modern India and China. The histories of psychiatry in regions such as Finland, the West Indies, Thailand, certain African, central and eastern European and Latin American countries have not been presented in this way before. An introduction by the editor draws together eras and themes.

As in any composite work the quality is uneven, although all the essays are well-written and, in most cases, extensively documented. Some are disproportionately long, whereas others are too short as judged by the country's importance to world psychiatry. Thus, whereas France is dealt with in 16½ pages, Scandinavia and Finland occupy 30½ pages (including illustrations), Latin America the same, and South Africa 23½. Nevertheless each presents a competent survey from the earliest time to the present day, taking into account culture, economic, political, religious, and geographical factors. In several instances these will represent for English readers the only presently available sources.

The chapter on Britain (pp. 168–206) is by the editor and M. Livia Osborn. On the whole, more consideration is given to the treatment and housing of the mad, rather than to concepts of disease causation. Rather too much space is devoted to Celtic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Britain where sources are sparse and often difficult to interpret, as they also are in the Middle Ages. In later periods influences from the Continent are not given sufficient mention and there is no mention whatever of phrenology. The last of these is a particularly serious defect as it is now being shown that the influence of phrenology on psychiatry at the beginning of the nineteenth century was as important as that of psycho-analysis at the beginning of our own.

The book will be of the greatest value in showing us how others have handled the madman, and how different concepts of etiology have been evoked by exactly the same clinical material. As a reference tool for the student it will be invaluable, as it will be for the more elderly traveller to foreign lands who wishes to learn something of the history of psychiatry in the country of his hosts. The extensive indices (pp. 729–770) render the book's contents readily and conveniently available.

Despite the defects mentioned, this book can be recommended as the only survey of world psychiatry. As a pioneer work one would not expect it to be entirely faultless, and it is hoped that it will stimulate others to emend it accordingly. It may also induce the preparation of similar works dealing with the world evolution of other medical specialities. Unfortunately its high price will limit its distribution and therefore its influence.