

the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and far into the age of reason. Nevertheless there is much to be learnt from a close reading of Michel Foucault. In the Middle Ages the madman along with the leper had a certain sanctity, for it was the Lord who afflicted him with his disease, and he was chosen especially by God to carry his burden. When, in the early years of the Renaissance, so many were wandering purposelessly around, they became a nuisance, and in company with the paupers they were often driven from town to town. Frequently, they were handed over to the care of boatmen; for what better way of getting a madman out of mischief than to send him to sea. There were the 'ships of fools', sailing the waterways of Europe; no figment of the artists' imagination but a grim reality. As we pass on through time to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the need to maintain a supply of labour meant that everyone must be set to work. Why, therefore, should the lunatic be idle and at large? With the idle poor they were herded into workhouses and prisons, and so we get large hospitals, such as the Hopitale Generale in Paris, and our own Bedlam in London. This is the period which Foucault calls the great confinement, "from the creation of the Hopitale Generale, from the opening in Germany and in England of the first houses of correction and until the end of the eighteenth century the age of reason confined. It confined the debauched, spendthrift fathers, prodigal sons, blasphemers, men who 'seek to undo themselves,' libertines. And through these parallels these strange complications, the age stretched the profile of its own experience of unreason".

This important book sheds fresh light, albeit through a haze of verbiage, on the dark history of the treatment of the mentally deranged.

**Maternity care. Mothers' experiences of childbirth.** P. M. FLEURY, M.B., B.S., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., D.P.H., D.R.C.O.G. London. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1967. Pp. 128. Price 25s.

**Preparing for childbirth.** FREDERICK J. GOODRICH, JR., M.D. London. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1967. Pp. ix + 246. Price 25s.

These books are in fascinating contrast to each other. Both authors are doctors. Dr Fleury qualified S.R.N., C.M.B. before training in medicine. She held an obstetric house post, was trainee in general practice, became obstetrician (and all else) in an African mission hospital and is now in the Public Health Service.

Her book is based on her prize Bishop Harman essay of 1965. Mothers supplied the material in reply to an enquiry organized by Dr Fleury. She does not claim that the letters represent a true random sample. The half (208 out of 447) who replied may be self selected since almost all had reasonable cause for complaint, both during labour and after delivery. In spite of much well-expressed distress the tone of the material quoted is very reasonable and attributed to the most part to staff shortage.

The number of hours spent alone while in labour is the most frequent, while associated fear, even terror, is foremost, a longing to have husband nearby in hospital contrasts with that pleasure in home deliveries. Dr Fleury quotes Dr Dick Read in brief conclusion, "Never trust a woman alone with her imagination in labour". The absence of interest and normal friendliness of the staff once delivery is complete is noted repeatedly, though without complaint. Illustrations include Royal mothers and African mums.

Attitudes have changed in the last three years and much of the content of these 208 replies may be no longer valid. Nevertheless, hospital delivery and

return home after 48 hours to kindly families and quiet nights seems to offer the best when obstetrically possible.

The second book is written by an American obstetrician for lay readers. He too is a follower of Dick Read. This is meant as a supporting book to carrying out medical advice including the puerperium and is for both parents. He shares Dr Fleury's belief that full information is desirable. Instructions after anatomy and physiology include dietaries, exercises, genetics, of course emotional adjustment, treatment of minor ailments and a glossary. The line drawings are enchanting, photographs of clay models of foetus and uterus are obscure, but perhaps aim at allaying alarm. The index is a useful one. There seems to have been little attempt to translate to suit this country's readers. It all seems so smooth and unreal in contrast with the recorded experiences of Dr Fleury's mums, but this reader feels that were the material and aims of the authors reversed the personal and educational material would be comparable in both. In any case there is evidence in each book of the high standard of professional and obstetric care in essential management and technique on either side of the Atlantic. Family doctors will find useful material for thought in both volumes.

**The nature of childhood autism.** GERALD O'GORMAN, M.R.C.P., D.P.M. London. Butterworths. 1967. Pp. vii + 134. Price 30s.

**The care and treatment of the mentally subnormal.** CHARLES H. HALLAS, S.R.N., R.N.M.S., R.N.T. Bristol. John Wright and Sons. 1967. Pp. 254. Price 35s.

Mental abnormality in children, whether psychosis or defect, is a subject so painful to the general public, and to many doctors, that we tend to avert our eyes and our minds from it. These two books, the first directed mainly to doctors, the second to nurses, show how much patients, doctors and nurses stand to gain from a sympathetic attempt to understand the nature, possibilities and limitations of the sufferers.

Autism in children is a fairly recent concept. As yet we are uncertain of its pathology; whether it is an illness or a symptom. It involves a withdrawal from reality, a mechanism that Dr O'Gorman emphasizes occurs at times in normal human beings. But when the withdrawal is so complete that the child fails to make relationships with others, he may appear to be mentally subnormal or schizophrenic. In fact, the child may be of normal intelligence though retarded by his withdrawal. Autism may be a mechanism used by a schizophrenic child, but not all schizophrenics are autistic. The subject is a difficult one, but Dr O'Gorman treats it comprehensively and makes it lively and interesting by means of a lucid style and copious case histories. The book should be most valuable to a family doctor who has in his care an autistic child, and worth reading by any who are interested in the still obscure origins of psychosis.

Mr Hallas's book is the third edition of one originally appearing in 1958 as *The nursing of mental defectives*. He has revised and added to it in the light of increasing knowledge, but there is no mention in it of autism. The arrangement of the book may make it hard going for the student nurse. After a good short introduction, Mr Hallas gives her a tough chapter on the legal aspects of mental subnormality, and then a mind-twisting chapter on clinical varieties. She would do better perhaps to start with chapter five, page 48, on the admission of a patient, where the subject becomes alive, and Mr Hallas shows his true kindness and humanity.

Dr O'Gorman's book deals with a subject just as difficult, but he starts us off with a bang with a case history that rivets our attention and gives us courage for