

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.

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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