

U. S. A. Ever since Hannah Mather Crocker, Boston widow and mother of ten, published her "Observations on the Real Rights of Women" in 1818, literature pressing for social reform and the rights of minorities has been one of the most fruitful facets of American writing. Since Mrs. Crocker's day, the female sex has nearly lost its position as a minority and, thanks in part to works such as hers, women have achieved great social gains. Now, as the books reviewed below attest, new minorities and new problems are exciting socially minded writers. Albert Deutsch's "The Shame of the States" deals with the 500,000 persons requiring treatment for mental ills; Roi Ottley's "Black Odyssey" describes the plight of one of America's oldest minorities, its twelve million Negroes; while Beatrice Griffith's "American Me" discusses a new and seldom considered minority, our three million Spanish-speaking Americans.

Are Psychotics People?

THE SHAME OF THE STATES. By Albert Deutsch. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1948. 188 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by RAYMOND G. FULLER

CONDITIONS in state mental hospitals are "the shame of the states." Unfortunately the people of the states are not sufficiently ashamed. They are not sufficiently informed. They should rise up and organize, insisting on proper, adequate care and treatment of the mentally ill and the mentally deficient in state institutions. For mental patients are people, too. Such is the general thesis of this crusading book.

The picture which the author draws is vivid enough, though pretty black, with infrequent dabs of contrasting white. It is largely selective of bad conditions. The evils described range widely through a long catalogue: the plant (old, outdated buildings, and even some new ones, that are unsuited to modern methods of helping patients get well, and some that are decrepit, vermin-infested, fire-hazardous); serious overcrowding and equally serious under-staffing (too few doctors, nurses, social workers, and other personnel, many of them ill-paid and ill-qualified); too little use of the special therapies; not least, the poor food, poorly prepared and served (too few dietitians and good cooks); and back of all this, which is only a sampling of the evils, political machinations, legislative ignorance, niggardly appropriations, and public indifference.

Dr. Karl A. Menninger, eminent psychiatrist, in his introduction to this book, spares the reviewer the necessity of saying:

In his efforts to make clear the seriousness of the situation in most state hospitals, I am afraid that Mr. Deutsch has not made it sufficiently

clear that there are numerous state hospitals where every effort is being made to do what should be done, where there are adequate numbers of staff doctors and fairly adequate numbers of nurses and aides, where no patient is abused or neglected, and where most patients are given personal consideration and the treatment considered best for their particular conditions. Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware are outstanding in this respect, and have made a sustained effort to achieve the goal of a modern, progressive state hospital system.

The book is made up mostly of pieces written for the New York newspaper *PM* and its successor the *Star*, over the past seven or eight years, plus a few brief and less journalistic pieces. The newspaper pieces tell of conditions in hospitals located chiefly

in the more progressive states, with the idea apparently that this selection would make the stories more shocking and impressive. Mr. Deutsch may be averse to making invidious comparisons on a geographical basis, but not from making the most of shortcomings left over from a record of past and continuing progress. He mentions, however, that the protagonist-patient of "The Snake Pit," in spite of her distressing experience, was helped to get well in one of the hospitals he excoriates. He finds another place "where patients get the breaks." There are notable anachronisms in the newspaper pieces even in the revision of copy for book publication. One is dubious, too, of not a few cited cases of so-called "neglect"—a matter of interpretation.

The impression conveyed that state mental hospitals in general are bad places is far from correct. The evils enumerated by Mr. Deutsch exist, but not all of them in every place. He asked Dr. Samuel W. Hamilton, "who has surveyed more mental hospitals than any other expert," if he could name "the best" state mental hospital he had seen. Dr. Hamilton's reply should be pondered more carefully than his questioner seems to have done. Though he couldn't say with certainty which, if any, state hospital is "the best" in the country, he pointed out that one hospital has a fine staff and an outstanding treatment program, while its physical plant is very poor; another has an excellent plant and good equipment, but a mediocre professional staff; and he went on to speak of several others, excellent in some respects, deficient in some. "None of them is perfect. They aren't



—From the book.

Ward for female "disturbed" patients at Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital as sketched by Eric Godal immediately after a personal inspection.

all wholly black, or entirely white. True, as Mr. Deutsch says, not a single state hospital meets *all* (italics supplied by the reviewer) the minimum standards of the American Psychiatric Association, but many are doing good work under handicaps. True, also, it isn't good enough, and in many instances not anywhere near good enough.

This would have been a better book if it had been written with a better balance between the good and the bad conditions in mental hospitals, and if there had been more emphasis on the problems of the hospitals and their administrators. Note might have been taken of the failures of the community in one way of preventing state hospital cases and the undue burdens thereby imposed. Also, of the variety of administrative systems under which the mental hospitals are operated in different states, in some of which the hope of rapid or radical improvement in the hospitals is vain until the system is so changed as to provide for professional non-political administration, with due authority.

The book contains thirty-two pages of photographs, pleasant and unpleasant, usually the latter.

Raymond G. Fuller has directed research for state mental-hygiene programs in such states as New York, Connecticut, and Ohio, has served with the Mental Hygiene Division, U. S. Public Health Service, and is co-author of books on mental health.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 287

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 287 will be found in the next issue.

YNFFNV KJF I UVVHCO ENCAN

'VHJCR FBN FHK HE FBN

AQGEE, FBIC IC ILYJQICAN

RHSC GC FBN XIQQNZ.—

PHUNKB LIQGCU.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 286
Enamored architect of airy rhyme,
Build as thou wilt, heed not what
each man says.

—THOMAS ALDRICH.

A Homesickness and a Long Wandering

BLACK ODYSSEY: The Story of the Negro in America. By Roi Ottley. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1948. 340 pp. \$3.50.

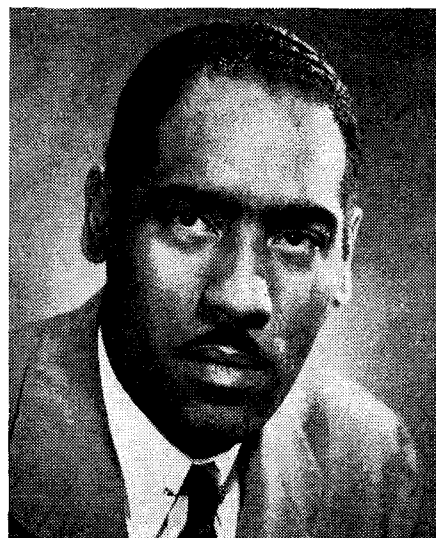
Reviewed by H. A. OVERSTREET

This is the story of a homesickness and a long wandering—a homesickness and a wandering not yet ended, but, we hope, nearing its end. It is heartening to see the whole story in perspective, for it tells of the white man as well as of the black. Here is the story of a black race that, through all the generations of white brutality, kept the core of its humanhood sound—a race that, in spite of cruelties and disappointments, has doggedly plodded along toward the homeland of the spirit. But here, too, is the story of a white race that, avid of profit, equipped with power, and forgetful of its pieties, turned its own humanhood into an ugly thing; a white race, however, that has been moving out of its perversion into a new soundness of spirit. Because this book describes an Odyssey—of whites as well as of blacks—it has the hopefulness that attaches to life wherever it is going somewhere. The black man is moving on; the white man is moving on. Some day they will be moving abreast.

This is the kind of material that does not get into the history textbooks, mostly because history textbooks are written about broad sweeps of history. They tell us about the Civil War, about the emancipation of the slaves, about the carpetbagging period, and so on; but, in the brevity of their telling, they keep these great movements of life impersonal. Young people, therefore, who read history in the schools, are not brought to a deep understanding of what has happened in their culture. They do not learn to feel the passionate struggle of life to free itself into life; nor do they see their own culture, as in this peculiar part, an effort to keep life from finding its way into life.

Someday we shall write this whole misbegotten episode of white supremacy frankly and unashamedly into our textbooks so that our children may look upon this perverted thing with a complete astonishment. The day when that can be done is surely approaching. The whole tenor of Roi Ottley's book is that "the strong men"—black and white—"keep coming on," and that the cherished time of man's humanity to man is nearer.

The strength of this book lies in its complete absence of passionate pleading. It is a straight, factual account of what has been happening in



—Glidden.

Roi Ottley: "The strong men keep coming on."

our American world, to Negroes and to whites, for well-nigh 300 years—ever since 1664, when Maryland became the first colony to legalize slavery. The factual data are packed with interest because invariably they involve the fate of particular human beings. But these reports are always more than mere recitals of events. The book, in fact might be called a study in the maturing of a culture. Negroes were forced by their American white oppressors to remain immature. These oppressors, in turn, by the very exercise of their oppressive powers, became fixated in their own peculiar moral and spiritual infantilisms. The history of the last 300 years—and particularly of the years since the beginning of World War II—has been the history of the slow maturing of the American whites to a sense of their moral responsibilities; and of the American blacks to a releasing of their human powers.

The Negro's eyes are lifted to the hills [writes Ottley] . . . the removal of the "For Whites Only" sign from many jobs, places of amusement, schools, and public institutions, is beginning to choke off his loudest quarrel—at least in many sections of the North. His new freedom has given him personal dignity and opportunities for creative expression beyond the slum corrals, and indeed opened a new world to him. . . .

The signs of the times have made the Negro hopeful, more so than at any period in history. This is not to say that he is not distressed by the forty-odd lynchings in the three years following World War II. But for one thing, the legend of the Negro's "place" is swiftly tumbling into the limbo of legends, shattering the traditional outlook of white and black alike.

The Saturday Review