

Part II.—Reviews.

Fears may be Liars. By JOHN A. RYLE, M.D. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1941. Pp. 95. Price 3s. 6d.

Describing himself as a rationalist, agnostic and materialist, the author states that he finds himself unable to believe in a soul, personal immortality and heaven. On the other hand his agnostic mind finds no difficulty in assimilating such concepts as purpose, an ultimate cause, "an evolving good," the immortality of ideas and qualities, and the indestructibility of matter. Like most evangelists he is at great pains to convince his readers that his creed is the only acceptable one.

Anxious to provide comfort for those troubled with doubts and fears during this present time of stress an attempt is made to allay our fears of pain, dying and death. Pain, we are reminded, is not as bad as it seems since it serves a biological purpose, while in the case of death the sophism is elaborated that where death is life is not and where life is death is absent.

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The Nursing Couple. By MERRELL P. MIDDLEMORE, M.D. London: Hamish Hamilton Medical Books, 1941. Pp. xiii + 195. Price 7s. 6d.

An original and interesting investigation by a psycho-analyst into the behaviour and difficulties of the nursing couple. On the basis of her observations on 30 couples, the author formulates a classification of suckling types: 14 are described as satisfied sucklings, the remainder are unsatisfied. The latter group is divided into excited (7), simple inert (3), and irritably inert (7).

It is concluded that the mother's fuss or roughness is a main reason for the baby's adaption to the breast being slow and difficult. Maternal anxiety, possibly determined by unresolved complexes centred about breast feeding, is blamed for causing this behaviour. Difficult access to the breast was also found to be common in the excited group.

The author has little sympathy for the discipline and routine of the lying-in ward. She is inclined to impute unconscious motive to account for ward ritual and the conduct of nurses and doctors. Unconscious motivation is a double-edged weapon; the unbiased reader may decide that there is no more evidence given of unconscious motivation in the behaviour of the nurses than there is that the writer was unconsciously motivated when she wrote these remarks about them.

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