THE SCRIBE'S COLUMN

A Ghastly Tale

I met the cleaning lady again the other day who was all of a tremble. She was just back from dusting the padded corner where they keep the Sub-Deans. 'Terrible it was', she said, 'one poor soul had cracked up completely, kept on saying that eating psychotherapists was wrong.' I reassured her that nobody was likely to eat one, not even a small one, and that it was not unknown for even the most robust minds to become temporarily unhinged when editing publications for the Education Committee.

When I went down to find out what was happening I found the other Sub-Deans giving the Editor of the new Handbook* a transfusion of Jaspers to restore his equanimity. He seemed quite recovered from the ordeal, saying 'If a camel is a horse designed by a Committee, I have just delivered a five-humped dromedary that was three years in gestation.' He looked mightily relieved as well he might, adding 'this masterwork is as dull and as useful as the Telephone Directory—the one book we all genuinely use'.

He was worried that not enough copies would be bought, but I reassured him that they sold the Nebraska telephone directory by calling it *People of the Plains* with a multitude of naked women on the cover, and suggested he might call the Handbook *How to spend your life with sex maniacs and other interesting people*. 'You miss the point,' he said, 'there is no difficulty getting people to read it. For example, even you might be asked by one of your trainees to explain the difference between, and the significance of, approval, accreditation, enrolment, attestation, a three types of basic registration and the two types higher registration, let alone the differences betwe the Merrison and Todd views of general and high professional training. It's the Schleswig-Holste question all over again—there are only three peop who understand all this, you, me and the Dea The rest will have to resort to the Handbook—but all of those psychiatrists who read someone else copy, instead of getting one for themselves, are la end to end around Belgrave Square, it will serv them right', he ended morosely.

'Nonsense,' I said, 'it is the very junior trainee who really need this handbook and I trust the Clinical Tutors will provide them with copies.' H brightened up when I said this and told me that h was off to the Central Manpower Committee, wh were thinking of moving the Maudsley to Salfor which 'at a stroke' would redress the manpow imbalance between North and South. The onl problem would be whether the exchange of th Camberwell for the Salford Register would b noticed. I'll keep readers of this column posted o future developments.

EZRA THE SCRIBE

* *Handbook for Inceptors and Trainees in Psychiatry*, edite by Thomas Bewley for the Education Committee, £1.2 including postage. Headley Brothers Ltd, Ashford, Ke TN24 8HH.

A CORRECTION

It is regretted that an error has been found in the Memorandum embodying the College's comments on the Inter-Departmental Committee's document, *A Review of the Mental Health Act, 1959*, published in the January issue, pp 9–17. The recommendation relating to Section 30(2) (p 12, top of right-hand column should have read 'We recommend that the duration of the order be changed from three days to 72 hours.'

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