BOOK REVIEWS


Adolf Meyer’s reputation has suffered a decline during the last twenty years such as is more commonly the fate of distinguished writers than of physicians and scientists. Meyer was a powerful force in bringing psychiatry out of its isolation and raising its esteem among all classes of the community in the United States, his adopted country. As a teacher, with a coherent theory, clinical thoroughness and a good scientific background, he trained a series of men who became the leaders of American and English psychiatry. The younger generation of psychiatrists, however, who had no direct contact with him, find it hard to account for the enormous respect paid him by their seniors. The explanation for this change in esteem probably lies in the contemporary emphasis on active treatment, which has moved the focus of interest to psychoanalysis and empirical physical procedures, whereas Meyer diffused his therapeutic, like his scientific concern, over a much wider range, commensurate with his philosophic conception of the forces that determine human behaviour and the means through which they work. The four volumes of his scattered writings, now piously collected, attest the width and the penetration of his contributions. He wrote no books, so it is in papers, addresses, and reports that his former pupils can recapture his teaching, and others who wonder at his prestige can see how solidly it was based. The first volume, on neurology, is in the classical tradition : studies in the neuroanatomy of reptiles and man, aphasia, cerebral trauma and neuropathology combine exactitude with originality and critical grasp. The other volumes, dealing with particular aspects of psychiatry—education, mental hygiene, and clinical problems—are a compendium of the growth of this branch of medicine in the twentieth century. They are a fitting memorial to the man who did so much to promote that growth.


This is a well presented account of existing knowledge regarding pain and its reactions by a group of workers who have made many important contributions to the subject. Of special interest is the account of many factors which can be used experimentally to alter pain thresholds. These include the effect of repetitive stimulation, competitive pain, mental distraction, and hypnosis.

The study of pruritis, itching, and tickle sense in relation to the factors which alter threshold is also important, for these sensations also seem to be subserved by pain mechanisms. The importance of the “feeling state” in relation to pain, the central excitatory state and the effect of frontal leucotomy are critically discussed. This book should be read by those who study painful conditions.


This small volume has its origin in the three lectures given in May 1950 on (1) synaptic transmission, inhibition and auto-rhythmicity in the spinal cord ; (2) the physiological basis of electro-encephalography, and (3) the auditory area of the brain, an oscillographic study of its activity. The author provides an authoritative presentation of some modern neurophysiological problems in language which clinicians can understand, and which they will study with great advantage to their endeavours to keep up with current research.


This valuable study was carried out in Bonn. All persons admitted to any mental hospital or “nerve clinic” in the Rhineland since 1825 were reviewed, to discover instances of joint or conjugal psychoses. An exhaustive analysis yielded 695 instances in which both husband and wife had had some psychiatric illness. From these were extracted 14 pairs where a schizophrenic had been married to a schizophrenic, four where manic-depressive had married manic-depressive, four where manic-depressive had married schizophrenic, and 15 where the endogenous psychosis in one or other of the partners was of an atypical form. The case histories of these 74 parents and of their children and grandchildren are given, and the findings critically examined to determine what light they throw on the strength of the hereditary factor in endogenous psychoses. The outcome indicates that the affected children of parents who are both schizophrenic exhibit the same type of disorder, and that likewise if both parents are manic-depressive, the
affected children will be manic-depressive also. The product of “mixed” marriages show a corresponding mixture of morbid types in the offspring. This result is in clear opposition to the concept of the Einheitspsychose and to the psychoanalytic view sometimes nowadays put forward, which denies a genetic identity to each of the two main types of disorder in question. Professor Elssäser’s statistical data about the proportions of affected children, however, are in opposition also to the bolder or simpler claims about the hereditary transmission of these disorders, for he finds that the proportions of children affected are between 30 and 40% and therefore appreciably less than Mendelian rules would lead us to expect if it were a matter of simple recessivity in schizophrenia and simple dominance in manic-depressive psychosis. The author does not consider fully the alternative explanations which have been or might be put forward, but concentrates rather on the striking similarity in clinical form between the illnesses of parents and children, and on the high proportion of the non-psychotic children who appeared, on careful investigation, free from any morbid traits. The detailed protocols and the strict evaluation of findings in this careful inquiry make it a notable contribution to an important and somewhat neglected subject.


The author, who is Professor of Psychiatry in the University of Bern, is well known for his personal contributions to the theory and practice of somatic methods of treatment in psychiatry. The first volume of the present textbook is concerned solely with insulin treatment, but one or more later volumes are to be expected in which other methods will be dealt with. If the later volumes maintain the very high standard shown by this first one, a service to psychiatry will be rendered which will be of the greatest value.

Although short reference is made to various modifications of insulin treatment, some of which have very little to do clinically with the main subject, the work is almost solely concerned with insulin coma treatment in schizophrenia. The approach is systematic and practically exhaustive, dealing in turn with technique, the pathophysiology and psychopathology of treatment, results, prognosis and indications, and, finally, the various theories which have from time to time been put forward to explain the extraordinary fact that favourable results are actually obtained.

The author’s approach is conditioned not only by wide reading and study but also by great personal experience, and shows balance, self-criticism, and sense of proportion. In the distracted and controversial atmosphere which unfortunately prevails throughout this field, this book is one of few of which so much could be said. It has a very full bibliography and will be of value not only to the practical therapist but to all psychiatrists who can read the author’s clear and easy German.


Sixty neurotic women who attended the Tübingen psychiatric clinic between the years 1946 and 1948 are the subject of this inquiry. The age range was 20 to 42; only 10 were married; the majority were hysterics. They were examined for physical and mental signs of immaturity. The conclusions drawn by the author are that there is a high correlation between retarded development and the occurrence of neurotic illness, and that this constitutional defect plays an undoubted part, probably as a predisposing factor, in the causation of such illness. Though the outcome of the study is probably sound, since it conforms to a widely held clinical tenet based on much clinical observation (especially of hysterics), the method of examination, the criteria, and the controls in this work leave much to be desired.


Dr. Schultz published his first textbook of psychotherapy in 1919, and in 1932 the first edition of his account of “autogenic training”. In its seventh edition the latter book represents, as he points out in the Preface, nearly 50 years of personal experience. He has elaborated during this time his technique of relaxation, which has many points of resemblance with Jacobson’s method, but makes greater claims and is closely linked to a body of German teaching and speculation about psychophysiological relations. Some of this theorizing will be unfamiliar and probably unacceptable to English readers, but the detailed account of the procedure which Dr. Schultz employs, with undoubted success, in the treatment of anxiety states and other neurotic and “psychosomatic” disturbances will be welcome. It is a method which Kretschmer has warmly espoused.

Dr. Schultz’s book on bionomic psychotherapy is a rather discursive, semi-philosophical essay, such as thoughtful psychiatrists seem impelled to write towards the end of their active career.


The highly unconventional methods of treating schizophrenia employed by Dr. Rosen created much interest and much doubt when he reported them first in 1946. The interest arose from the audacity of the methods, their strong but unorthodox psychoanalytic component, and the success reported in patients with long-standing disorder and much deterioration of conduct. The doubts were excited by the same features, especially the last. Since then Dr. Rosen has acquired fuller psychoanalytic training and a more confident technique of treatment; his initial successes have apparently been confirmed by later inquiry and he has
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added to them in the last few years, but on this score independent corroboration would be desirable. His main technique is direct interpretation; he assumes various roles, in conformity with the unconscious needs and emotions which he divines behind the patient's utterances and movements, and he believes that in all these roles he represents the mother of his patient who has regressed to the sucking stage of infancy. In the first chapter of the book Dr. Rosen describes his technique in detail, and in subsequent chapters gives verbatim accounts of what he and the patient said; the extreme boldness of his interpretations would be more than most psychiatrists would venture upon, even if they were psychoanalysts. The test of any therapeutic procedure, however, lies not so much in its theoretical soundness or in its rationale as in its effects upon the illness: Dr. Rosen claims that with his treatment "hopeless cases have changed, recovered and taken their places in society". Whatever the reader may conclude about the therapy and the book, the former deserves a factual clinical report about the condition before treatment, and after it, of all the patients under Dr. Rosen's care, and the book deserves to be read as an illuminating description of what one enthusiastic psychoanalyst does in the initial treatment of severe and advanced schizophrenia.


This book can only be appraised against the background of German psychiatry in this century. During its vigorous and flourishing clinical phase, of which Kraepelin was the embodiment, with all the emphasis on analysis of form and function rather than on content and psychological treatment, it was self-sufficient and therefore indifferent to what went on in other countries. This book represents a belated protest against that standpoint. Its main theme reads like that of many American and English texts between the wars, with their "dynamic" orientation, their discreet use of psychoanalytic concepts, and their plea for psychotherapy on a broader front. Dr. Schultz-Hencke, however, believes that he is a voice in the wilderness, preaching an advanced doctrine which may jeopardize his reputation. He does not appear to be a psychoanalyst now in the strict Freudian sense, nor to have used orthodox psychoanalytic methods for the treatment of the schizophrenic woman whose record takes up nearly half the book. His thesis is that psychological factors are as important in the genesis of schizophrenia as of neuroses; in developing it he takes occasion to examine the nature of neuroses, the changing views of schizophrenia put forward since Ideeler's time, and some prophecies of his own about the future of psychiatry.


This book may be regarded as a French variation upon the stress theme, with "post-aggressive oscillating reaction" as the substitute for "general adaptation syndrome". The author puts his case ingeniously with a wealth of references and some observations of his own; but the effect is rather unconvincing. He has applied his theory to the prophylaxis and treatment of post-operative shock: his chief emphasis here is on "artificial hibernation", brought about by general refrigeration and by what Dr. Laborit frankly calls a "medicinal cocktail", of which the chief constituent is a recently synthesized drug, of unstated chemical composition, which produces a similar effect to hexamethonium. This therapeutic procedure has the powerful endorsement of Professor Leriche, who says in his eulogistic preface that it is a revolutionary advance, with a great future. But there is room for doubt.


This book bears confident testimony to the dominance of psychoanalysis in American psychiatry. The outlook of the writers is not as uncompromising as that of English psychoanalysts, nor the theory as abstruse, but the assured faith that psychoanalysis provides the true and essential basis for psychiatry is that of psychoanalysts everywhere. The contributors differ, as is inevitable when there are 15 of them, in emphasis, style, and attitude, but the differences are far less than might have been the case if the school centred on Franz Alexander had not been so strongly represented: two-thirds of the book have been written by Chicago contributors. For them, as "for most American writers," "dynamic" is a word of potent virtue. The relative moderation of the claims of Alexander and his pupils is evident in many of the chapters. The first part of the book describes psychoanalytical concepts and their history; the second the psychoanalytical view of clinical psychiatry; and the third the influence of psychoanalysis on medicine, social anthropology and "current thought".


The immense development of psychology in America fully justifies the preparation of this interim history. Dr. Roback, who has been an active contributor to the subject for 40 years, is well fitted to write what is, in effect, a contemporary account of men and trends during a period of rapid expansion. His language is lively yet discriminating, his personal bias clearly expressed and reasonably well under control, his arrangement of the complex material lucid, his survey comprehensive.

Though the book is less scholarly and well-documented than E. G. Boring's exemplary "History of Experimental Psychology," its scope is wider and it has a more personal tang. Many of its judgments will doubtless be modified in a longer perspective, but for the outsider who wants to understand the diversity and growth of American psychology it is an informative guide.
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So many attempts have been made to present modern psychiatry to an average public that a newcomer must write exceptionally well and control his subject matter with exceptional mastery if he is to justify his entry into this over-populated territory. Dr. Stafford-Clark meets these requirements. His book is a highly readable, illuminating, and sound presentation of psychiatry, free from jargon, dogmatism, or pretension. On controversial subjects, such as psychoanalysis, he is outspoken but fair; on the wider implications of psychiatry, as he sees them, he expresses a sincere personal point of view and on the present limitations of this branch of medicine he is candid without being depreciatory. The book is a valuable summary, somewhere between a textbook and a layman’s guide; it is in many ways well suited to the needs of medical students, and perhaps of some neurologists and neurosurgeons.

BOOKS RECEIVED

(Review in a later issue is not precluded by notice here of books recently received.)


Notes on Mental Deficiency. Compiled by J. F. Lyons and W. A. Heaton-Ward. (Pp. 48 ; illustrated. 3s. 6d.) Bristol : John Wright & Sons. 1953.


