BOOK REVIEWS

THE HUMAN MIND. THE ORGAN OF THOUGHT IN FUNCTION AND DYSFUNCTION


The themes running through Dr. Mackenzie's attempt to describe the workings of the mind as a discrete organ are anxiety, depression, apathy; simplification and amplification; deliberation and immediacy. By writing these words with a capital letter he gives them a more technical appearance and meaning than most of them usually bear: thus the last two pairs just mentioned are described as contrasted forces driving the mind. The exposition is mostly on this level, and will not attract the reader with scientific training: it is too like a nominalist's caricature of realist doctrine.

ENCEPHALOGRAPHY

E. Graeme Robertson (Macmillan & Co., Melbourne. Pp. 105. 32s. 6d.)

(Monograph from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Research, Melbourne)

Dr. Robertson's monograph will be welcome both to neurologists and to neuro-radiologists.

Encephalography has suffered in this country from inadequately controlled technique and often from lack of co-operation between clinician and a full-time radiologist. The technique described in this book is a refinement of the lumbar route, but the subject is discussed in a well-balanced manner and the indications for and use of the cisternal route are by no means ignored. It must be realized that so thorough a technique will be time-consuming and that encephalography, to get the best results, must be regarded less lightly than has at times been the case in the past, when a standard series of views, after a routine filling, without radiographic control, has been the rule.

An excellent anatomical study of the filling of the various parts of the sub-arachnoid spaces, the cisterns and the ventricles is made, and abnormal conditions are well illustrated clinically by case notes. The only point which is not made quite clear is the influence of purely radiographic factors on ventricular measurements, for the assessment of which knowledge of the apparatus and technique is essential.

The make-up of the book is good and the illustrations and reproductions of X-ray films are really first-class.

It can be confidently recommended as a concise and comprehensive review of the subject and should do much to keep encephalography in its proper perspective in neurological investigation.

THE NEUROSES IN WAR

Several Authors under the Editorship of Emanuel Miller (Macmillan and Co., Limited, London. 1940. Pp. 240. 10s. 6d.)

So much has been written on neuroses, and especially on the neuroses of war, that a compendium cannot be expected to say anything new: much of the book might have been written in 1919. A series of opinions and recollections such as this is, however, valuable if it sifts the inchoate material deposited in medical journals and doctors' memories, keeping only what a riper judgment and experience can approve. Thus there is a useful chapter reviewing briefly the literature of the subject, on much the same lines as earlier compilers. The bulk of the book deals with the psychopathology and clinical forms of diagnosis and treatment of neuroses in soldiers: there is also an essay on civilian reaction, morale, and prophylaxis which is original and informative though at many points the subsequent events have shown how difficult it is to apply some doctrines of psychological medicine to the solution of social problems, actual or imminent.

ANXIETY AND ITS TREATMENT

John Yerbury Dent (John Murray, London. 1941. Pp. 124. 3s. 6d.)

Written in simple language for the lay public, this is a discursive treatise on alcohol and its effects, with some general psychiatry and physiology to make good measure. Much of it is correct, or only slightly distorted, but there are some bad descriptions (as of the Korsakow syndrome) and misleading comparisons, e.g. between diabetes mellitus and addiction to alcohol: "we are not born alcoholic or diabetic but we can with persistent poisoning by alcohol or sugar become alcoholics or diabetics. In alcoholism there is inefficiency of the liver, in diabetes of the pancreas . . . ." and so on. A detailed account of the apomorphine method of treatment, with which the writer had had much experience and success, is given, and a final chapter gives commonsense advice about how people should behave during air raids.