Reviews and Notices of Books


Hardly anything has been written on this subject, so that a book which deals with the 'follow-up' for several years of nearly 1,200 neurotic patients who had been inmates of the Cassel Hospital for Functional Nervous Disease is certainly welcome. As the author says, it does not profess to settle the question, but it should stimulate further enquiries. The volume contains a mass of interesting and instructive information. The difficulties in obtaining after-histories that will give a correct indication of the condition are noted. Whether a permanent mental change can be effected in the neurotic and, if so, by what means and through what treatment, are vital points also discussed. We learn the very important fact that it is possible to effect a radical change in the mental outlook of many neurotics with permanent results by a short and simple therapy. Even long-standing cases can be thus successfully dealt with, and advanced age was not found so much a barrier as has been usually supposed. In many patients no exploration of the unconscious was needed and Dejerine's method of persuasion was frequently all that was necessary. Seemingly, repressions in the Freudian sense were often not found to be so causal as conscious ideas. The prognosis in special groups such as anorexia nervosa, traumatic and compensation neuroses, obsessional-compulsive neuroses, and alcoholism, is treated of in special chapters and brief consideration is given to the relationship of neuroses to suicide and insanity.

The second half of the book is devoted to statistical tables and case-histories. Every psychopathologist should study these pages carefully. The contents are not only authoritative, but lucidly and rationally written without that handicapping bias which is only too commonly found among members of some special school of thought.
An Enquiry into Prognosis in the Neuroses

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