Reviews and Notices of Books.


There are few psychiatrists who can present the problems of the mind as lucidly and interestingly as Dr. William White. We have had many valuable contributions from him in which he takes that broad viewpoint which is so essential to the student. In this small volume he states his main idea has been not so much to present a body of facts as to create a state of mind. This he does admirably by dealing briefly with all the most important psychological conceptions as they relate to mental medicine. An addendum on "Bad thinking in medicine," concludes a book which is most excellently adapted to the needs of those the author addresses—the medical student, beginners in psychiatry, social workers, and all interested in mental hygiene.

C. S. R.

The Inner Discipline.—By Charles Baudouin and A. Lestchinsky. Translated from the French by Eden and Cedar Paul. 1924. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd. 7s. 6d. net.

The authors herein present for the intelligent layman the past and present teachings concerning mental forces and their guidance for health. In their opinion "there seemed room for a book which could find a place between the technical treatises comprehensible only to experts and the popular handbooks characterized by all the blemishes of a shoddy civilization—a manual which might prove a really helpful guide to its readers." We can hardly think that in the late flood of psychological literature no previous helpful guide can be found, yet in this volume there are chapters which make for special interest. In Part II. the various methods of psychotherapy are briefly and usefully discussed—suggestion, simple and hypnotic; the persuasion of Dubois; psychoanalysis; and autosuggestion. As may be surmised from M. Baudouin's other works, this last-named method is given a value which we think is hardly scientifically merited. Nevertheless, it is pointed out how all of them must be studied and each applied as suitability directs. Part I. deals with the philosophical and religious teachings of Buddhism, Stoicism, Christianity, and the development of Christian Science and 'New Thought.' Those who desire a wider viewpoint from the historical side will appreciate this section. The book is eminently readable and the matter simply presented. It should help many to understand the intricate factors involved in 'Inner Discipline.'

C. S. R.

The Nervous Patient.—By Millais Culpin, M.D., F.R.C.S. With chapters by Dr. Stanford Read on Major Psychoses and Mr. W. S. Inman on Eye Symptoms. 1924. London: H. K. Lewis & Co., Ltd. 10s. 6d. net.

The task of assessing the relative importance of the physical and psychical components of disease has never been squarely faced until recent years, and
although due attention has been paid to psychological factors by the masters of medicine of all times, the growing knowledge of the physical facts of the organism in health and disease has only served to tighten the materialistic bias of medicine. Strange as it may seem, this tendency in medical progress has developed more or less parallel with the antimaterialistic tendencies of the purely physical sciences. Although the theory of evolution has led to a conception of the organism as a unified system reacting to an environment according to inherited disposition and acquired habits, physicians who are in daily contact with the most complicated of organisms—man—have been singularly blind to the psychological facts of experience which most constantly play a part in the organism's reactivity. The folk mind, however, has never in its blunt and direct way been able to dissociate the person from the physical vicissitudes that it suffers, and even physicians have paid tribute to this factor by the cultivation of the bedside manner. The book before us is a vigorous and compelling exposition of the psychical background of those disorders of function and behaviour which are found in that enigmatic person—the nervous patient. With a view to precision in terminology, and incidently to clear the issue as to what nervous disorder really means, the author opens with a chapter on classification and nomenclature, and stresses the importance of psychical determination in those disorders which have been loosely described as neuroses or disturbances of nerve function. In one sense, all pathological conditions of the organism may be considered neuroses in so far as neurological mechanisms are involved, from the simple pain referred from a stretched viscus to the agitation of an anxiety state. The fundamental principles of psychoanalysis can only be handled adequately in a full treatise, but the author is not primarily concerned with a vindication of this standpoint; he gives sufficient information to the non-specialist reader who has no intention of applying the technique himself, but who wishes to be 'made wise' as to this method of approach. To such a reader the chapters on the anxiety and obsessional states, symptoms called hysterical, and the general principles of diagnosis, should clear the mind of many misconceptions. Such prevalent disorders of general practice as asthma and gynecological disturbances, with their frequent psychical accompaniments, have chapters to themselves, full of examples which may bring to the practitioner a new vision of his own cases.

Mr. Inman's chapter is in more senses than one an 'eye-opener,' although one may venture to suggest that the association of left-handedness, squint, and stammer indicates that something more than psychology will be needed to explain the apparent correlation.

Dr. Stanford Read brings a new optimism into his brief survey of the major psychoses, and after reading his chapter the practitioner ought to approach these cases with less unwillingness and more sympathy than he may have felt before.

This book is no mere apologia for the psychological point of view, but strikes a very positive and combative note, and it may be favourably recommended to the general practitioner, for whom it has been written.

E. Miller.