BOOK REVIEWS

The author's approach to drugs is conservative in the extreme. For instance, on the treatment of depression he writes: "In certain occasional, very selected cases of mild depression, the amphetamines and the barbiturates can sometimes play a useful adjutant role." The treatment of choice is "intensive psychotherapy in experienced hands". Electroconvulsive therapy is, indeed, discussed, but more with regard to its unconscious meaning and its effect on unconscious punitive internal forces, than to indications and contraindications. At times the dynamism becomes too swift for the British reader. Thus phantom limb is regarded as conversion hysteria, and fainting is "a primitive type of defensive reaction by which one completely surrenders or shuts off outside perception".

The 14 chapters of the book are devoted to anxiety, phobic reactions, conversion reactions, dissociative reactions, depression, fatigue reactions, hypochondriasis, obsessive-compulsive reactions, and neuroses following trauma, with separate chapters for mental mechanisms involved. At the end of every chapter there is a fairly extensive American bibliography, and at the end of the book a glossary and indexes. Owing to its one-sided approach, however, it is not likely that neurologists and psychiatrists in this country will find the book of much value. Unfortunately it cannot be taken as a sound guide to prevailing American views on A.D.P., as the author is somewhat unorthodox in making anxiety the basis of all neuroses.


The studies of the psychoanalyst are difficult to correlate with what is known of the physiology of the brain, and yet their investigations into the earliest stages of mind development make an important contribution to the understanding of brain mechanisms. Cerebral physiology and character formation must be built up as an elaboration of the primitive reactions of the infant in which, for example, the mouth and anus play an important part. Psychoanalytical theory often assumes a language and complexity which seem fanciful, and yet if one turns aside from much of the verbiage and studies the stages of character and mind development as demonstrated by psychoanalysis, much of interest will emerge. This book is written with more respect for scientific standards than is shown by most writers on this subject and includes much of interest to the student of brain function.


The 10 authors of this book have made a special study of special groups of children. These include not only the handicapped but also the gifted children. The last-named study is of particular interest to educationalists and others interested in mental development.

BOOKS RECEIVED

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


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