

generally good, and James Smith produces a very good review of recent advances in microsurgery, and this is augmented by Millesi's article on free nerve grafts. In the face of acknowledged poor results in peripheral nerve surgery, the extra care and apposition which results from microsurgery offers the best hope for improvement, although, as many of these authors point out, it will be some years yet before the results can be properly assessed and compared.

CAMPBELL SEMPLE

**THE BIOFEEDBACK SYLLABUS: A HANDBOOK FOR THE PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGIC STUDY OF BIOFEEDBACK**  
 Edited by Barbara B. Brown. (Pp. 495; illustrated; \$26.50 cloth, \$19.75 paper.) Thomas: Springfield, Ill. 1975.

The title of this book does not immediately convey what it contains, for though the word 'syllabus' can be used in this way it is a little unusual. In fact the volume is a collection of abstracts on biofeedback, its physiological background, methodology and techniques. The field is rapidly expanding and the aim here is to provide a critical evaluation of the literature for researchers, clinicians, teachers and students. Certainly the researchers are well served but whether other groups are likewise helped by the book is less certain. There are sections on electrodermal activity, heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle systems. EEG, and in particular alpha feedback, is covered adequately but there is a more comprehensive companion volume *The Alpha Syllabus*. On the whole there are few references later than 1973, and the use of biofeedback techniques in treatment is scantily covered. The abstracts themselves are adequate but of necessity brief. The volume, therefore, provides an entry point into the literature obtained at a considerable price even in the paperback version of the book.

D. F. SCOTT

**THE FAMILY** Edited by H. Hirsch. (Pp. 566; illustrated; Sw.Fr. 176.) Karger: Basel. 1975.

This large and very expensive book reprints all the papers delivered at the 4th International Congress of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynaecology, held in Tel Aviv in late 1974. No doubt all of the speakers enjoyed their visit to the Holy Land, but by no means all of them said anything worth recording for posterity. And some of what was said had nothing to do with the family. There are, of course, some interesting and thoughtful papers, but the majority are ephemeral.

In an age of increasing costs and decreasing resources, surely the publication of complete conference proceedings is unnecessary and anachronistic.

Who could feel justified in spending more than £30 on such a book?

J. L. GIBBONS

**PSYCHIATRY FOR STUDENTS** Vol. 1. By David Stafford-Clark. (Pp. 225; £2.65.) Allen and Unwin: London. 1974.

The new edition of this basic textbook for medical students is a well set out and very readable book, covering the subject with enough thoroughness to stimulate an interest in psychiatry without giving too much detail which might confuse the student. Case histories provide a valuable addition not normally present in textbooks of this size, and, although at times they may take up a little too much of the text, they are particularly useful for students with limited clinical experience. Most chapters dealing with individual syndromes are clearly written, and the description of schizophrenia includes information about chronic patients often not available in other basic texts. The chapter on psychiatric emergencies is also useful, particularly for those who are not destined to be career psychiatrists, but will nevertheless be faced with acute psychiatric problems.

Although the chapter on treatment covers the subject adequately, a little more detail could have been given in those concerned with specific disorders. The book is open to criticism on the grounds that classification of certain disorders is rather idiosyncratic. For example, failure of development, a category not included in the ICD, is held to include dementia, personality disorders, sexual perversions, and addiction to drugs and alcohol. There is also a tendency, as in other single author books, to express the personal views of the author rather than those more generally held, an example being found in the section about psychiatric indications for termination of pregnancy.

Overall this is a useful and readable textbook for students and is not over-priced.

SUSAN WHYTE

**TREATMENT SETTINGS IN PSYCHIATRY** By J. B. Copas, M. Fryer, and R. Ashley. (Pp. 104; illustrated; £2.25.) Kimpton: London. 1974.

This is a well-written and readable book although the subject matter is rather limited. The text consists of a report on the results of a research project in which a general hospital unit at Rochford and a mental hospital at Runwell were compared. The main criticism is that the data could have been adequately presented as an article in a journal and, in my opinion, is insufficient to warrant a separate textbook.

The introductory chapters include some irrelevant material and are rather fragmented. A more detailed account of the history and services in the area con-

cerned rather than an attempt to compress the history of psychiatry in general would have been more appropriate. There are fairly clear descriptions of the methodology of the study, and the authors seem to be aware of many of the difficulties in comparing the two hospitals. The tables are particularly clear and helpful.

The overall results suggest little difference in outcome of treatment at the two hospitals but some of the subsidiary findings are of interest, particularly the attitudes of relatives and patients themselves. The main criticism of this type of study is how far the results can be extended to other hospitals in the area and more particularly to other areas of the country.

The book is not cheap considering the rather limited content and would probably be of interest mainly to those involved in administration and planning rather than the more general reader.

MICHAEL R. BOND

**DEPRESSION** By Ross Mitchell. (Pp. 112; illustrated; 50p.) Penguin: Harmondsworth. 1975.

This book is one of a series of *Mind Specials* published by Penguin Books. In so doing they are co-operating with MIND—The National Association for Mental Health—a charitable organization concerned with the prevention and treatment of mental illness and handicap. This series of illustrated, inexpensive paperbacks is 'aimed at students, practitioners and non-specialists with a particular interest in each topic'.

Dr Ross Mitchell is to be congratulated on undertaking the difficult but important topic of depression. He deals with a range of mood disturbance, covering not only illness, but also grief and responses to other crises in life, including the menopause and retirement. The problem of depression is viewed from many different perspectives, reflecting various schools of thought. It is not possible to weigh in any balance the aetiological significance of various factors when some are drawn from fields of philosophy or sociology, others from biology, pharmacology, and organic disease. The author manages to convey the complexity of the problem in simple language which allows the reader to appreciate the multifaceted nature of the difficulty.

It is doubtful whether this book would be particularly helpful to a patient suffering from depression, but I am sure that it would be of some help to many of those who live with patients subject to depressive illness. It will be especially useful to those with paramedical interests, but it should not be neglected by medical men who are too busy to read textbooks of psychiatry.

A. M. SHENKIN

**YEAR BOOK OF PSYCHIATRY AND APPLIED MENTAL HEALTH 1975** Edited by F. J. Braceland, D. X. Freedman, A. J. Friedhoff, L. C. Kolb, R. S. Lourie, and J. Romano. (Pp. 475; £15.35.) Lloyd-Luke: London. 1975.

This volume carries on the well-known *Yearbook* tradition, now 75 years old. Eminent authorities edit a series of sections, each containing abstracts of papers published up till July 1974 with a linking critical commentary. The book thus attempts to combine the functions of a review journal and an abstracting journal.

This edition has been published with commendable speed and it is well produced. Inevitably the price is high. Is it a price that all psychiatrists should be prepared to pay? The answer is no. It all depends on the psychiatrist's area of interest. Some topics are dealt with extensively and authoritatively, others get very sketchy treatment indeed. There are 34 pages on biochemistry and pharmacology, 48 on pharmacotherapy, but a derisory two and a half pages (involving three papers!) on suicide. The section on child psychiatry is six times as long as that on mental retardation. Can it be that the very short sections represent topics in which the editors are not really interested? Let up hope that the unevenness of coverage will be put right in the next edition. Better to omit topics altogether than to give them such cursory attention.

J. L. GIBBONS

**MODERN PERSPECTIVES IN THE PSYCHIATRY OF OLD AGE** Edited by John G. Howells. (Pp. 630; illustrated; £10.00.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1975.

This is the 6th volume in the series of *Modern Perspectives in Psychiatry* edited by Howells; it purports to cover 'growing points' in the psychiatry *particular* to old age.

The individual chapters vary widely in their range of appeal and clarity. The chapter on nosology by Professor Sternberg of Moscow was so terse as to be unintelligible, whereas some of the American contributions were so verbose as to be equally incomprehensible. Counter-balancing this, the chapter, 'Facing Death' by Elizabeth Ross (Illinois) was outstanding, and of value to any doctor dealing with the elderly.

The book's main value is to postgraduates studying for the MRCPsych. examination and merits a place in a postgraduate library catering for this group. Its two main flaws for them are the fact that many of the references quoted will not be readily available to those working outside university centres, and the presence of potentially misleading misprints or mistakes—for example,