

BOOK REVIEWS : BOEKRESENSIES

MENTAL ILLNESS

Bridging the Gap. From Fear to Understanding in Mental Illness. Edited by R. F. Tredgold, M.D., D.P.M. Pp. 270. 30s. net. London: Christopher Johnson Publishers Ltd. 1958.

In the past an atmosphere of hush-hush shrouded all happenings in mental institutions. Now the pendulum has swung over to the other extreme and we have over-publicity, an equally unhealthy situation. Recently some ex-patients and their friends broadcast stories of incidents at mental institutions in Britain which aroused considerable public interest and consternation.

It was alleged that people were illegally or recklessly committed to mental homes, detained without just cause and often deliberately subjected to exquisite cruelties. The medical and lay controllers of these institutions countered by stating that these tales were devoid of foundation or grossly exaggerated, and represented the outpourings of paranoid patients and of patients whose obsessions dominated and coloured all their thoughts and actions. But the public preferred to listen to the sensational hair-raising narratives of the ex-patients rather than the bland unadorned and unpalatable explanations of the doctors.

The book under review, compiled by men with first-hand acquaintance with mental hospitals, embodies a careful analysis of these stories and allegations, as well as a sympathetic consideration of the sweeping generalizations of both sides. While pronouncing unbiased and logical judgment, it makes constructive recommendations for bridging the gap between the attitude of the patient and the person entrusted with his welfare, and shows how mutual trust and cooperation can be substituted for fear and suspicion.

The book deals with conditions in Britain which have much in common with South African conditions and, therefore, anybody desirous of understanding and improving the care of psychiatric and senile patients in this country, would do well to study it.

I.M.H.

CLINICAL ENZYMOLOGY

Klinische Enzymologie. Die Fermente in der Pathogenese, Diagnostik und Therapie. Von Priv.-Doz. Dr. R. Abderhalden. viii+390 Seiten. 34 Abbildungen. DM. 48.00. Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag. 1958.

At first the author gives a short introduction into enzymology. There he mentions definitions, terminology, chemical structure, methods for estimation of the activity, etc. After the introduction he describes several enzymes such as amylase, acetylcholin esterase, phosphatases, lysozym, insulinase, katalase, peptidases, lipase, etc. He deals with the physiological actions of the enzyme, with methods for determination of the ferment and with clinical findings. The next chapter concerns congenital diseases which are caused by ferments. Cystinosis, cystinuria, glycogenoses, lipidoses, gout, adrenogenital syndrome, oxalosis and many other diseases are described. The last chapter is devoted to therapy by enzymes. Therapeutical actions of hyaluronidase, trypsin, streptokinase, plasmin and other ferments are mentioned. The book gives an excellent review of this field of research and can be recommended to everybody who is interested in enzymology or in most recent trends of medical research. A bibliography of 46 pages makes it possible to find the original articles.

H.W.W.