

Part II.—Reviews.

Child Psychiatry. By LEO KANNER, M.D. London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox. Pp. x + 528. Price 27s.

Nothing could be more fitting than that the first comprehensive text-book of child psychiatry should come from the pen of Dr. Leo Kanner. His work in the psychiatric department of the Harriet Lane Clinic reflects the learning and wisdom of Edwards Park, the Professor of Pediatrics at Johns Hopkins University, of which the Harriet Lane Clinic constitutes the children's block.

Dr. Kanner's psychiatry is expounded on the psycho-biological principles evolved and taught by Prof. Adolf Meyer in the adjoining Phipps Psychiatric Clinic. It is, indeed, a testimony to the universal application of these principles that in the more restricted field of child psychiatry they yet hold good, and serve to elucidate the causative factors which may be at work.

To English readers, not accustomed to the Meyerian terminology, the nomenclature may seem discouragingly strange, yet each term is explained, and so fully illustrated that there need be no difficulty in following the general scheme, and the reasoning behind it. Both these professors, of psychiatry, and of pediatrics, contribute an introduction, and it is perhaps as a linkage between the two schools that this volume will make its essential contribution. There has surely been a tendency to separate unduly the care of the physically disturbed child from that of the child who shows a problem of emotional and social adaptation, and yet in no other sphere of medicine is the close interdependence of physical and psychical factors more easily demonstrable. This book is the outcome of clinical studies made by a psychiatrist working in a children's hospital, and whilst it is essentially written from the psychiatric angle, it may be taken as embodying far more of the pædiatrician's point of view than is usual in the child guidance clinic organized as a separate unit. Opinions will differ as to whether this is a gain or a loss. In this country it remains one of the less usual methods of providing psychological help for mal-adjusted children, and the tendency is still to link these personal problems of children with the psychiatric clinic, or the educational services rather than with the children's hospital. This book would suggest that the union which Dr. Kanner has built up for the pursuit of his work is a singularly happy and satisfactory one.

The general lay-out of the book follows on a somewhat unusual method of classification, but in line with psycho-biological principles, the child is viewed as a whole, inseparable from the various factors, of heredity, of environment, of his physique and its possible disturbances, and the way in which these affect his personality and his behaviour. After a couple of introductory chapters, the section of "Examination and Diagnosis" takes up roughly one-fifth of the book. On the principles and methods of treatment, including the very general aspects such as work with the community and parent education,

there are only 19 pages. In explanation of this it must be added that throughout the subsequent sections dealing with organically determined problems, and what are called "personality difficulties expressing themselves in the form of involuntary part-dysfunctions" and "personality difficulties expressing themselves as whole-dysfunctions of the individual", there are abundant illustrations taken from case-material indicating something of the kind of work done on the case and the result obtained.

Nevertheless one is left in doubt, perhaps a wholesome doubt in these days of wholesale acceptance on this or that particular therapeutic method, as to the actual nature of the treatment undertaken, and the methods by which the generally excellent results were obtained. It is perhaps truer than we care to believe, that the mechanisms of cure by psychotherapy remain even more obscure to the critical observer than the mechanisms of causation. It is to be hoped that in subsequent editions there will be the same careful and critical study, not so much of how and why individual methods work, as of the factors dominating causation.

The author has a somewhat marked bias against the concepts of psycho-analysis as applied to children. His very brief summary of the psycho-analytic viewpoint suffers from this bias, and the practice of using inverted commas around such generally accepted terms as "free associations" and "sublimation" tends to imply a greater irritation at what are regarded as unwarranted assumptions than would seem to be necessary. This attitude may account for a tendency shown in some of the case-descriptions of disregarding, even as a hypothesis, the importance of early emotional problems. A fascinating case-study of a girl on p. 362 concludes the description with the words, "she was placed in a boarding home where she adjusted and was soon rid of her behaviour difficulties". In other words, the story stops just at its point of maximum interest.

The wealth of verbatim case-material adds greatly to the interest of the book, and although the point is not particularly emphasized, the factor of the broken home, or lack of parental harmony and wise discipline, seems even more prominent than in comparable material from English clinics.

Here and there the classification is confusing, and in spite of the apology it is difficult to understand the ranging of the attack disorders, including epilepsy, alongside sexual difficulties and antisocial trends, while headache and migraine are included under a subheading of the central nervous system, where the symptoms are described under the systems affected. This section also includes "encopresis" (the art of involuntary defæcation which is not directly due to organic illness) under affections of the digestive system, following it with a case-history in which this symptom was surely correctly ascribed to jealousy of a sibling.

There is no mention of Schilder's disease among the anergastic reactions, but possibly some cases of Heller's disease described among the major psychoses might be regarded in this country as atypical cases of Schilder's. In any case, no volume of child psychiatry can claim, in our present state of knowledge, to have said the last, or perhaps even the first, word as to classification. Dr. Kanner has been at pains to explain his rationale, and his conclusions are neither dogmatic nor exclusive.

His greatest contribution lies in his sympathetic descriptions, and his lucid, common-sense delineation of the problems, both in maladjusted children and unhappy parents, which so urgently call for understanding and relief.

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