

Schizophrenic patients admitted to a Veterans Administration hospital for the first time were assigned to one of four treatment groups on a random basis, until each group consisted of 20 patients. The treatments were (1) chlorpromazine; (2) reserpine; (3) the most suitable according to clinical judgment, i.e. E.C.T., insulin coma or drug treatment; (4) hospital routine alone. The patients were evaluated psychometrically with a behaviour rating scale, the M.M.P.I. and the Shipley Hartford Scale. A social case-study was also undertaken, each case being rated on 12 prognostic factors. The result of treatment was assessed after 30 days and rated on a 9-point scale for improvement. After this evaluation the patients were given whatever treatment seemed indicated, unless they were fit for discharge. They were re-evaluated after a year. The authors found that the "clinical judgment group" did best. The second best was the chlorpromazine group. The reserpine group did worst. When the authors presented their interim report to the American Psychiatric Association they quite rightly came in for heavy criticism, mainly for the absurdly short evaluation period. The authors stated in reply that their design was statistically impeccable and that they would not have been justified in withholding indicated treatment from their patients for longer than 30 days.

E. STENGEL.

Group Psychoanalysis. By B. BODHAN WASSEL, M.D. Peter Owen, London, 1959. Pp. 306. Price 30s

The author, an American psychotherapist, has been guided mainly by the theory of Karen Horney who in the later part of her life had adopted a sociological and moral theory of the aetiology of the neurosis. She dissociated herself from what she called the "instinctivistic", i.e. fundamentally biological orientation of psychoanalysis. Neurotic trends, to her, were safety devices against potential dangers and most neurotic conflicts were culturally determined. Her theory had certain features in common with those of Adler, Jung, Sullivan, and the "anthropological" psychology of the existentialists. The strong emphasis on human relations made it readily applicable to group therapy. The neurotic, according to this theory, strives for superhuman perfection. Group therapy "helps him to recognize and conquer his illusions". It reveals "the unconscious neurotic pride and the illusion of omnipotence" which underlie the neurosis. It "analyses and resolves self-effacing and self-inflating neurotic patterns and gradually identifies, elicits and mobilizes the individual's healthy, holistic strivings". In the language of classical psychoanalysis, this school of psychotherapy is mainly concerned with the restoration of ego-functions, especially those highly valued by society. The strong re-educative orientation is likely to appeal to non-medical psychotherapists, of which there are many in the United States.

E. STENGEL.

A Mental Health Hand Book. By IAN SKOTTOWE. Edward Arnold, London, 1957. Pp. 196. Price 21s.

This book is intended for doctors, social workers, health visitors, mental health officers and others in public health departments whose work brings them into contact with the field of mental health. It ought to be obligatory reading for members of Management Committees of mental hospitals. It can also be recommended to medical students, general practitioners and to psychiatric nurses and their teachers. No other book covers the social and administrative aspects of psychiatry so fully and lucidly as this highly readable volume, which contains an amazing amount of information and wisdom. The following are the headings of the eight chapters: an introduction to mental health services; what is mental health? personality and constitution; natural experience and social cultures; the varieties of mental ill-health; some social repercussions and opportunities; towards prevention and treatment; organization, training, health education and research. The book was published before the passing of the new Mental Health Act which it foreshadowed. Far from making the book obsolete, the new Act has given it heightened topicality, because many of the problems so

lucidly discussed here have now become practical issues, and the number of people concerned with them is bound to grow rapidly as the result of the new legislation. The publishers will be well advised to enclose a note to this effect into the book, in case individuals or organizations should think that it is out of date.

E. STENGEL.

Schizophrenia. By MANFRED SAKEL. Peter Owen Ltd., London. Pp. 335. Price 35s.

The late Manfred Sakel was a tragic figure. His was a remarkable success story. An unknown young psychiatrist, he succeeded in persuading the all-powerful head of a famous psychiatric university institute to offer him all the facilities at his disposal for a new treatment of schizophrenia. Insulin coma treatment was soon adopted all over the world and opened up a new era in the treatment of the major psychoses. Sakel's place in the history of psychiatry is secure, whatever the fate of his therapy may be. Yet he was never satisfied with the kind of fame it brought him, and he died a deeply disappointed man. He wanted to be recognized not only as a bold pioneer in the field of therapy, but also as a scientist and thinker. Learned societies often appear ungrateful to the brilliant innovator who stimulates progress but refuses to submit to the discipline of science. This book explains why full scientific recognition was withheld from Sakel. It shows an amazing lack of humility and of other attributes of the scientific attitude. Much of the book makes embarrassing reading, especially the theoretical chapters in which the author propounds a peculiar brain mythology of his own. He firmly believed in the specificity of his treatment which "eliminates psychotic intercellular pathways". In his opinion, schizophrenia is caused by a dysfunction of "the insular and adreno-cortical system". The limitations of the treatment are not discussed. The "classical" method, which is described in detail, cannot have fulfilled his expectations, because later he recommended extremely prolonged comas in many cases. The value of this posthumous book, and of its companion volume dealing with epilepsy, is mainly historical. It tells a great deal about the man who shook psychiatry out of its therapeutic inertia.

E. STENGEL.

Family Worlds. A Psychological Approach to Family Life. By ROBERT D. HESS and GERALD HANDEL. University of Chicago Press, 1959. Pp. 306.

The authors, both of whom are social psychologists, have studied the problem how a family functions. There are the biologically determined universals of family life, and there are other features which are culturally determined. The latter show a greater variety than the former. Five "psycho-social family portraits" are presented in this book. The unit of study was the typical American "nuclear family", i.e. the parents with their biological children. The data were obtained by interviewing each member of the family. The TAT and a sentence-completion test were applied to each person. The authors found that each family had a "family theme", i.e. a pattern of feelings, motives and fantasies grouped about some concern, such as "flight from insecurity" or "demonstration of constructive independence", etc. They aim at a typology of family interaction patterns. This is a promising pilot study in an important area of research. Knowledge about the social aspects of normal family life is essential for the understanding of disturbed family relationships which so often become the concern of the psychiatrist.

E. STENGEL.

A Short History of Psychiatry. By ERWIN ACKERKNECHT. Translated from the German by SULAMMITH WOLFF. Hafner Publications Coy., New York and London, 1959. Pp. 98. Price 25s.

This is a useful little book which deserves to be widely read, especially by psychiatrists in training. The author, who is Professor of the History of Medicine in the University of Zurich, views psychiatry as a branch of medicine. He is also interested in its ethnological aspects. However, he tends to overrate the existing knowledge about