

book made him change his mind again. The section on treatment is, for the general practitioner, very disappointing. This can be summed up by the fact that in the references at the end of this chapter only four out of 27 have been published in the last decade, and nine were published prior to the last war. Anxiety is given as the cause of some psychosexual disorders but the modern psychotherapeutic agents are not even mentioned.

The commonest psychosexual problem dealt with in general practice is probably secondary impotence in the male (vaginismus seems to be dealt with adequately by the gynaecologist without reference to psychiatry). Even impotence is not all that common. Advice is given in the book that all patients with this complaint should receive a full physical examination (including possibly hormone assays) to include endocrine or neurological causes. There is doubt if this is generally accepted in practice. The dictum that impotence is rarely the presenting symptom if the primary cause is organic and that if it is the presenting symptom, we can go on to finding and treating the psychogenic cause is more practicable.

It is doubtful if this book was intended for general practitioners. It will be useful to those who are enthusiastic about psychotherapy and will be of limited interest to the others.

Baillière's handbook of first aid. Sixth edition.

Edited by STANLEY MILES, C.B., M.D., M.Sc., D.T.M. & H. London. Baillière, Tindall, & Cassell. 1970. Pp. vii+336. Price 20s. (£1.00).

Teaching first aid. Edited by STANLEY MILES,

C.B., M.D., M.Sc., D.T.M. & H., and PETER J. ROYLANCE, R.D., M.D., Ch.B. London. Baillière, Tindall and Cassell. 1970. Pp. vii+103. Price 18s. (90p).

These two books go hand-in-hand. The first is a detailed account of first aid and its principles, omitting no detail which might be helpful to the beginner who wishes to understand not only what to do, but the reasons for doing it.

The second book, 'Teaching first aid', is intended to guide medical practitioners who are instructing classes in first aid. It is full of excellent suggestions about teaching methods and gives many examples of how to get lessons across.

Both books ought to be in the hands of every doctor who is interested in promoting knowledge of first aid. They are up-to-date in detail and well designed each for its own purpose. They are recommended by the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention and deserve high praise.

Sanity, madness and the family. Second edition.

R. D. LAING and A. ESTERSEN. London. Tavistock Publications. 1970. Pp. xii+272. Price £2 5s. (£2.25).

This book describes some of the family life of eleven patients firmly diagnosed as 'schizophrenic'. Different members of the family are interviewed and recorded separately and in conversation with each other. The authors ask: Are the experience and behaviour that psychiatrists take as symptoms and signs of 'schizophrenia' more socially intelligible than has come to be believed? Their own answer is yes, but the preface to this second edition stresses how limited is the question they ask. "Agnes and other patients we have studied have all come to be regarded as suffering from some meaningless pathological process. By building up a picture of the actual situation in which Agnes has been living for years, we begin to see that she is struggling to make sense of a senseless situation—senseless at any rate from her position within it." The senseless situation turns out to be almost always the attitudes of close relatives, in particular their ambiguity, internal dishonesty (unconscious maybe), their 'manifest contradictions' and mystifications. The patient is in the position of Pavlov's dog faced with two contradictory stimuli.

As doctors we have to put ourselves in the patient's shoes during each consultation. 'Schizophrenic' patients behaviour and thinking is so strange to us that we may find this essential task difficult or impossible with these particular patients. By lighting up the dark part of the stage in which these people are acting their lives, the authors make it possible to some extent to understand the meaning of what they say or do. We begin to be able to feel with them. Indeed it is hard, reading the book (which is very well written) not to feel angry with these stupid prejudiced parents, until we realize that they themselves are in a tight corner, that they suffer too, that they had their parents to cope with and that we witness a process handed on from generation to generation—a tragedy of inheritance and upbringing.

The value of this book is not just in relation to 'schizophrenia'. It throws light on families. We general practitioners often claim to know about and to deal with families, but have we ever counted the occasions when we do more than cope with the problems of individual members? 'If one wishes to know how a football team concert or disconcert their actions in play, one does not think only or even primarily of approaching this problem by talking to the members individually. One watches the way they play together'. Their techniques of interview take these writers a long way towards understanding how people really behave towards their children, parents and siblings when the blinds are down.