

**Guide to Psychiatry.** MYRE SIM, M.D., D.P.M. Edinburgh and London. E. and S. Livingstone Ltd. 1963. Pp. ix + 868. 55s.

This book is intended for general practitioners, physicians, surgeons and paediatricians as well as for psychiatrists and others working in social sciences and psychology—and medical students. The author sees it as a Guide for the Perplexed—‘ a reasonably small and comprehensive one ’.

To write a book on this most difficult of medical subjects which is equally appropriate to readers with such different levels of understanding and experience is a task which must be nearly impossible. Equally ambitious is it to write a book which is both comprehensive and small. Dr Sim's book is not small but it is admirably comprehensive. Psychodynamics and neuropathology are represented with equal strength. Under the first head Freudian ideas predominate but all contemporary schools of thought have a place. One cannot fail to be impressed by the number of different approaches to the understanding of psychiatric illness, by the author's grasp of them and yet by the impossibility of fitting them into a consistent overall picture. In psychiatry any author must choose either to simplify by being dogmatic and partisan or to display the complexity by representing every point of view. Dr Sim does the latter.

General practitioners will find this a guide to psychiatry as it can be practised in the psychiatrist's setting. It is not an immediate guide to the problems which they meet in their own setting, either for their understanding or for their management. If example is needed, one can cite the discussion on the treatment of phobic-anxiety. This condition, though much less common than are anxiety states with physical symptoms, is nevertheless represented in every general practice. The only recommended treatments in this book are the use of intravenous thiopentone, or intravenous acetylcholine, preferably after hospital admission. Yet general practitioners do treat these patients by supportive discussion and oral medication; some of their patients improve or recover. They do need methods which are appropriate to their own setting because only one in ten of their psychiatric problems is referred to a psychiatrist.

The book compels admiration because of the great effort which the author makes to integrate the psychological and the physical factors in the causation of psychiatric illnesses. As example there is a proposed explanation of manic-depressive psychosis in terms used by Freud and his successors. Such attempts to penetrate to a deeper level of understanding do not yet command agreement but they are suggestive and challenging. Their inclusion is valuable but does not reduce the final level of perplexity in the reader. For this to happen we may perhaps have to await a second Freud.

**A Study of Brief Psychotherapy.** D. H. MALAN, M.A., D.M., D.P.M. London. Tavistock Publications. Pp. 305. Price 35s.

This is another in the series of the “ Mind and Medicine ” Monographs. It is easy to recognize the aura created by Dr Balint of the Tavistock Clinic, without actually reading that the author is a senior hospital medical