

**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

officer at the Tavistock Clinic. In these 300 pages an attempt is made to evaluate the factual and measurable evidence from 19 case histories, to assess their result in psychotherapy in retrospect, and attempt a measurable statistical analysis. Anybody uninitiated to this mystique practised at the Tavistock Clinic, will find himself bewildered by the terminology and the philosophical discussion. Yet this serious attempt to arrive at an appraisal at what must be a shortened form of psychoanalytical therapy, here termed, "Brief Psychotherapy", is of definite value. There is no doubt that the grouping and searching to find a suitable method for general practice is indeed of great importance. This book marks a further step and demands our attention and admiration for its learned way and industrious application, though whether it will lead to general acceptance of the author's conclusions will remain to be seen.

**Narcotic Addiction in Britain and America. The Impact of Public Policy.**  
EDWIN M. SCHUR. London. Tavistock Publications. 1962. Pp. vii + 281. Price 35s.

This book is the result of two years' research in England by Dr Schur—a sociologist. Although narcotic (or sleep inducing) drugs are chiefly considered, stimulating drugs (e.g. amphetamines) are also included in the survey.

The different methods of approach to the problem in the U.S.A. and Britain are discussed at length and the paradoxical situation is shown that whereas in the U.S.A. numerous laws and enactments have failed to ameliorate conditions, in Britain, where the drug addict is treated not as a criminal but as a sick person, the problem is very small compared with the U.S.A. This is not accounted for by the difference in population as the ratio of addicts to population is also smaller in Britain.

No common factor in social class could be found. One factor common to both countries is that of keeping the addict off drugs once medical treatment has succeeded in 'curing' him—i.e. the relapse rate is very high indeed. This, it is suggested, is the basic problem and is due in both countries to an inadequate programme of after-care. One distressing feature is that in Britain the proportion of addicts in the professional classes (doctors, nurses, etc.) is extremely high compared to the proportion in the U.S.A. No treatment is discussed, but withdrawal symptoms are vividly described and numerous case histories are given.

The bibliography is full and complete. Although published in England the book is written with American spelling—e.g. "labor, colored, etc."; possibly one shortcoming is that a glossary of addict slang or argot could be included.

**Absorption and Distribution of Drugs.** Based on a symposium held by the Association of Medical Advisers in the Pharmaceutical Industry. Edited by T. B. BINNS, M.R.C.P., D.C.H. Edinburgh and London. E. and S. Livingstone Ltd. 1964. Pp. xi + 270. Price 37s. 6d.

The Association of Medical Advisers in the Pharmaceutical Industry organized a symposium at the Royal Society of Medicine in 1963. The