

Book Reviews

Mental disorders in later life. Oscar J. Kaplan. (Ed.) Stanford Univ.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1945. Pp. vii + 436. (Illustrated.) \$5.00.

Within the last few years physicians, psychologists, sociologists, biochemists, and physiologists have come to see the importance of diseases peculiar to old age, and a large number of publications has appeared dealing with various aspects of the problem of geriatrics. It is obvious that these different phases of the subject are closely interrelated and must be considered in an integrated fashion if they are to bring positive results. It is gratifying, therefore, to see that the editor of this book has been able to enlist the aid of well-known authorities on the subject and has produced an integrated presentation of most of its important phases. As is always the case in contributions of this type, its separate chapters vary both in importance and quality of the presentation.

The most valuable of the chapters are those dealing with the physiological aspects of these diseases, the psychological investigations, the neuroses of later maturity, the psychoses occurring at this age, the psychosomatic problems, and the psychotherapeutic methods. It is interesting to note that in all of these there seems to be a consensus as to what constitutes the important nucleus of the problem, and we are impressed particularly by the following points:

(1) The maladjustments associated with old age are not so much dependent upon actual destruction of tissue as they are upon the disturbances in homeostasis.

(2) The disturbances in old age cannot be said to be due primarily to either organic changes or the impact of social problems but must be regarded as the result of a combination of both.

(3) Both the neuroses in general and the psychosomatic disturbances in particular, occurring at this age, may be of two types: those that are encountered at any age, and those that are especially characteristic of the later years.

(4) Finally, and perhaps the most hopeful feature as far as practical therapy is concerned, are the points brought out both in the chapter on neuroses and that on treatment—that psychotherapeutic efforts are definitely worth while and can be successful in old age.

Some of the chapters leave us with the feeling that not enough stress has been placed on points of importance. This is true, for instance, of the chapter on sociological aspects, where the broad social implications of age and the attitudes of society in general are not brought out as sharply as one would wish, and of that on the problems of nutrition in old age, which is entirely too short and too superficial to be of as much value as one would have expected.

Finally, there are two chapters that leave one with the question as to whether they really belong in this book. One is a chapter on older mental patients after long hospitalization,

which in itself is an excellent contribution but has really not much bearing on the problem of aging. The other is the chapter on toxic deliria in which entirely too much space is devoted to the discussion of extraneous subjects and polemics.

There is a brief introduction by Dr. Karl Bowman which presents the general aspects of the problem and a very thoughtful concluding chapter by Dr. E. J. Stieglitz on systematic orientation. On the whole, the book makes a very good impression and is recommended to the reader as a very worthwhile contribution to the studies of personality disturbances in later maturity.

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Industrial and commercial geography. (3rd ed.) J. Russell Smith and M. Ogden Phillips. New York: Henry Holt, 1946. Pp. xiii + 978. (Illustrated.) \$4.90.

Textbooks are so characteristically dull that it is a relief to read one which maintains a high level of interest for more than 900 pages. The volume surveys the industries of the world as they have been affected by the Power Age. In an undertaking so comprehensive, this is a feat worthy of note.

The effectiveness of the book must be attributed in large part to the authors' ability to write readable English. By vivid writing they succeed in convincing the reader that man's relation to his environment is a dynamic subject, not a static or dead concept.

Starting with a brief survey of energy sources and fundamental factors affecting manufacture, the authors describe in turn the great industries of the world for each continent. The fuels are presented first and are followed by iron and steel, other metals, and nonmetals. This sequence has the advantage of focusing attention on the basic industry, but has a disadvantage in that the topics of forestry, agriculture, animal industries, and fishing are apt to seem anticlimactic. Smith and Phillips avoid this pitfall by close integration between subjects and by stressing the perpetual nature of agriculture. The ultimate exhaustion of all mineral deposits emphasizes the fact that, historically, agriculture was the first industry developed, and in the final analysis it may prove to be the mainstay of civilization. It is possible that an historical approach, starting with agriculture and building up to the climax, the iron and steel industry, might have strengthened this tenet and added an element of suspense, thus giving greater unity to the volume.

The description of the world's resources and industries occupies 733 pages. The final section, which presents an analysis of world commerce, unfortunately contains the only conspicuously poor writing in the book. There are some involved sentences, and occasionally the authors' meaning is given a ludicrous connotation that certainly was never intended. For