

Reviews

Certified. By H. G. Woodley. Victor Gollancz.
9s. 6d.

This book is "an autobiographical study" . . . "the very human story of a man who found himself certified insane and confined within one of our asylums. . . He at once set about turning evil to good by making a point blank study of insanity. . . He experimented upon himself and his companions, and gained much insight into this complex subject".

So says the publisher's "blurb"; one may, however, find it easier to accept the first phrase than the rest of this quotation: the good which results is not entirely unmixed, the nature of the experiments is not always clear, and the insight is sometimes scarcely apparent. This is a pity, for Mr. Woodley's sincerity and energy are obvious, and his style is vivid; so that his book could do much to improve mental hospital conditions by mobilizing public opinion towards their reform.

The need to improve much in these institutions is accepted by all concerned in the matter; and it is easy to see their practical difficulties in the shape of lack of staff, lack of accommodation, lack of popular sympathy and understanding. Unfortunately, the constructive suggestions which Mr. Woodley makes are few, and not likely to help either the medical profession or the general public. He considers that the causes of lunacy, for example, can be removed by educating the people about sex, and about the far reaching effects of venereal disease. Moreover, his condemnation of shock treatment and his comment "not only is there no treatment for mental disorders but there is absolutely none whatever for physical ailments" is likely to do untold harm. It is, of course, the opposite of the facts and will discourage many from seeking treatment at an early enough stage, and so is diametrically opposed to the work of those trying to educate public opinion in this matter. It thus must contribute to the stigma and fear of mental illness which Mr. Woodley elsewhere, so rightly, decries.

There is also the danger that Mr. Woodley's style and other inaccuracies may discredit his whole book, and so let his readers think that the story is quite incredible, or in fact the content of his own mental illness. This would be a pity, for his account of conditions in wards is probably applicable enough to some under-staffed and under-financed hospitals whose authorities would welcome any attempt to raise public opinion to support them in their attempts at reform.

R.F.T.

The Kingdom of the Lost. By J. A. Howard Ogdon. John Lane—The Bodley Head Ltd. 10s. 6d. net.

This is another book, written by an ex-patient in a mental hospital. Its potential value may also be lost by its mode of presentation. Indeed, as it stands, it is difficult to see that many readers will derive any benefit from it. It is true that it gives a description of abuses in mental hospitals, and the suggested remedies deserve sympathy; but the rambling way the whole book is presented, and the disjointed sketches of the author's behaviour will make it difficult for the ordinary reader to follow, however interesting the detail may be to psychiatrists.

The main object of the book would appear to be to describe the author's escape from mental disease, as

well as from a mental hospital, by methods based on Hatha-Yoga practices. The capacity to use such practices obviously requires much self-discipline and patience—and it is doubtful whether the guidance given by Mr. Ogdon is clear and straightforward enough to enable other patients to adopt this relief; while, on the other hand, it does not contain enough detail to serve as a scientific basis for an investigation into the possible use of such a system to be employed in "stemming, checking and finally routing the progress of mental disease".

R.F.T.

The Theatre of Spontaneity and Psychodrama and the Psychopathology of Inter-Personal Relations. By J. L. Moreno. Beacon House, New York. 1947. \$3.75 and \$2.

These are two of the sixteen psychodrama monographs, published by Beacon House (of which twelve are by Dr. Moreno). They will be of interest to any reader concerned in this technique, which is as yet by no means widely known in this country but has already influenced methods of psychiatric investigation and treatment.

Psychodrama and the Psychopathology of Inter-Personal Relations does in fact provide clinical information and a description of the technique. It, moreover, emphasizes the way in which the psychodrama may throw light on hitherto obscure facets in the personality of the patient and in his relations with his family and friends. Moreno himself stresses the need to modify the technique to the needs of a particular individual, and his warning is to be remembered that "a technique of training does not emerge 'out of the blue' but in close contact with the momentary strictures" of each fundamental situation. A technique of training applied on the wrong level can be wasted effort or harmful. Time will undoubtedly provide clearer information from those in this country who have themselves become experienced enough in this technique to lay their investigations before a wider circle.

The Theatre of Spontaneity, which was published first in 1923 in Potsdam, and of which this is the author's own translation, is a very different piece of thought, and marks his transition from religious to scientific writing (in the words of the preface). It may be felt by several readers that the transition is not always apparent; and that the principles of science are only yet foreshadowed. Moreno claims in his introduction that "God . . . had stopped a day too early. On the seventh day he should have created for Man a second world, free of the first. . . *The Theatre of Spontaneity* continues God's creation of the world by opening for Man a new dimension of existence." The religious significance of this claim is beyond the scope of the reviewer, who can merely feel disappointed that he cannot appreciate its justification in the rest of the book.

R.F.T.

Basic Mental Concepts. By Edward Glover, M.D. Imago Publishing Co., Ltd. London. 3s. 6d.

It is not clear precisely to what audience this book is addressed. Its purpose, to quote from the preface, is to revive interest in the fundamental disciplines of psycho-analytical theory as a counterweight to "the post-war inauguration of a 'silly season' in medical psychology