

bromide reaction, and the epoxidation and hydroxylation of ethylenic compounds with organic peracids. Vol. 8 contains eight chapters, including catalytic hydrogenation of esters to alcohols, the Sommelet reaction, the metalation reaction with organolithium compounds, and β -lactones.

Some of the cathedrals and other noble buildings in Britain enjoy partial relief from their burdens through the activities of associations of 'friends': Prof. Adams and his collaborators, fulfilling a similar beneficent function for molecular edifices, might well be hailed as 'friends of organic chemistry'.

JOHN READ

NEW METHODS OF SCHOOL TEACHING IN AUSTRALIA

Teacher, Pupil, and Task

Elements of Social Psychology applied to Education. Edited by O. A. Oeser. Pp. xiii+196. (London: Tavistock Publications, Ltd., 1955.) 18s. net.

IN 1953 a refresher course for teachers, carried out by the method of group discussion, was held at the University of Melbourne, and fourteen contributors to this book, all of them teachers in the University or in training colleges, were leaders of these discussions and have prepared the book in response to a demand by the teachers for a reference manual. The editor, O. A. Oeser, who also contributes two chapters, is professor of psychology at Melbourne.

It would seem that the teachers might have profited by a longer and more thorough treatment of the topics discussed—although suggestions are given for further reading. As it is, the separate sections of the book differ considerably in method of treatment, and in general satisfactoriness. The chapters on testing and on examinations are simple and straightforward; but they are not sufficiently detailed, and neither is that on vocational and educational guidance. The chapter on 'the problem child' is as adequate as is possible in covering such a complex subject in a small space.

But the most interesting and most controversial part of the book deals with the promotion of good social relations between staff and pupils, and of the pupils with each other. It is recommended that the natural social affinities of the children should be assessed by Moreno's sociometric technique; that classes should be divided up into small groups, on the basis of these affinities and of similar ability; and that the groups should carry out their school work as a group activity, with the teacher suggesting and guiding rather than giving direct instruction. Now the suggested method undoubtedly offers points of great interest; and it seems possible that it does promote highly desirable easy and friendly social relations. It is also claimed to make the children more active and more interested, and to stimulate them to work better. But little evidence is available to substantiate this claim.

It seems unlikely that the more intelligent children would profit by these methods in studying the more arduous and difficult subjects. Indeed, the result might be to produce the type of individual described in American society by David Riesman in "The Lonely Crowd": the individual whose sole purpose it is to get on well with others, to adapt his behaviour

flexibly to his society, and to do what is expected of him by others. Perhaps the authors have no such intention. But it would be disastrous if such procedures were adopted uncritically, without further experimental test, to the neglect of the intelligent and highly individualistic child, whose particular interests and initiative require individual encouragement and strenuous adult teaching.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS OF LIFE IN A MENTAL HOSPITAL

The Mental Hospital

A Study of Institutional Participation in Psychiatric Illness and Treatment. By Dr. Alfred H. Stanton and Dr. Morris S. Schwartz. Pp. xx+492. (London: Tavistock Publications, Ltd., 1954.) 35s. net.

DURING the past ten years American sociologists and social psychologists have shown great interest in the analysis of subordinate institutions within their society and, in particular, in studies of prison and of mental-hospital communities. This focus of attention has been influenced no doubt by contemporary events, which have directed attention to the overcrowded State prisons and State hospitals as social problems of some urgency. In the latter case, the quickening of theoretical interest has been due in no small measure to a series of papers by A. H. Stanton and M. S. Schwartz which began to appear in 1949. The three-year study of the functioning of a mental-hospital ward, on which these reports were based, is the subject of this book.

If there is one generalization which can be safely made about any human institution, it is that it is not perfect. Social analysts, like psychoanalysts, find it easier to recognize failures of function than to do justice to systems which work smoothly. The great merit of this work is that it subjects to careful scrutiny all those aspects of mental-hospital life (such as the formal administration, the daily interactions among patients and between patients and personnel) which tend to be taken for granted and ignored. In repeated instances, the authors have demonstrated that patients' illnesses can be aggravated or relieved in response to events occurring in this social penumbra. Their discoveries are often too true to be altogether welcome. Already they have provoked reactions from incensed administrative psychiatrists; but the data and their interpretations remain, to be confirmed or modified by other social scientists.

Two criticisms may legitimately be directed against this work. First, it is disappointing that original explanatory concepts are so rare; most are derived from established inter-personal theory, and the most original of all (the effect upon a patient's mental state of covert disagreement between two of those in charge of him) now appears to be attributable to previous observations by Suzurek. Secondly, with some notable exceptions, there are all too few instances where the *verstehende* concept (an intellectually satisfying explanation) has been confirmed by systematic, statistically significant, observations. This defect is in part a measure of the pioneering quality of the authors' work, and can be remedied. A valuable section of the book, which will interest everyone concerned with mental-hospital practice, is the review of recent sociological studies in this field.

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