Book Reviews

High, Wide and Deep. By C. Madeline Dixon. Geo. Allen & Unwin, 12/6.

C. Madeline Dixon has taken the words of Schiller, Deep meaning of life hid in children's play' as the theme of her latest book on the growth and development of young children. Three-dimensional living—high, wide, and deep—through their play activities and in their everyday experiences in contact with their fellow creatures, should be the lot of every child if he is to attain full stature as an independent and creative adult. After publishing her previous book the author went back to work with children of all ages, both in home and school, for a period of ten years in order to gain a more complete and understanding knowledge of her subject. So often does it appear in the lectures and writings of psychologists as though the small child were compounded all of problems and complexes. The author was amazed at the gap displayed between the jargon spoken by certain adults and their slight knowledge of children. The only way to understand children is to get to know them.

The young child often leads a Jekyll and Hyde existence between home and school. In the former he may he a very special individual, such as an only child, or the baby and pet of the household; while at school he is merely one among his contemporaries, all with interests and needs parallel to his own. The conflicting situations may for a time cause confusion in the mind of the child and may even lead to the development of symptoms of psychological disorder.

There is a wide range in the minds of all children, however young. They are a product of the immediate results of their environment in both their positive and negative reactions; and they are also a product of age-old fears and ecstasies. They need channels for the expression of these things.

The subject matter of this book is divided into two parts, viz., "The Play Group" and "Children in the Home".

The dimension of "Width" in this three-dimensional expansion of life is concerned with socialisation of the child—the development of interest from himself to things and to his fellow beings, including, as it does, sharing, sacrificing, gaining and adjusting. Various kinds of play whereby this may be accomplished are discussed. Types of play which provide opportunities for physical courage, quick thought and action, discipline, perseverance, out-of-door nature study and friendships are also discussed. Amongst the group were non-adjusting children already in the process of developing into bullies or suffering from compulsions and excesses. The methods used for combating these tendencies are interesting, particularly the use of out-door locations known as Wild Man's Woods and The Village.

"Height" is the conception used to signify a stretching up to creative activity and is concerned with ideas and emotions, not people and things. Creative expression is spontaneous in young children and based on sources within the child. "Children under 5 are not yet copyists in Art," says the author. The use of language, drama, dance, music and painting are necessary here and Miss Dixon has her own ideas about these activities. The desire for the use of these should spring spontaneously from the child and the adult should be there merely to help with simple advice where asked for, and not to impose on the child a perfectionist theory of technique. Above all, over-stimulation should be avoided and periods of little content or even of boredom should be accepted by the child as normal.

"Depth" is perhaps the quality most lacking in modern life, with its presentation of many problems in nature and science completely solved and the everyday use of perfected scientific apparatus and quick travel. How soon do the faculties of wonder and awe perish through lack of opportunities for development? "To-day's children are in need of some opportunity to slow down and get below the surface of things," says Miss Dixon. "We give knowledge instead of letting it grow." Even the teaching of science becomes more of an exciting technique for uncovering truth rather than a process of slow assimilation and inner experience. In those early pre-school years when troublesome queries are so often discouraged by impatient adults, children need to have their early concern with the depths of life encouraged so that these fundamental qualities are not destroyed. We should not seek to protect him from this questioning as though we had a fear that he
might be engulfed. "How do you make worlds?" said a small boy. There are many ways of answering that question that might easily help to destroy the faculties of wonder and awe instead of encouraging them.

The short study of the development of a two-year-old is interesting and the chapters entitled "Back Stage" concerned with home life, discipline, security and orientation for the only child, are full of wisdom. This is a most attractive book, with its lovely photography of young children at play and its sympathetic and intuitive understanding of the inner experiences of the child mind.

E. D.

Psychopathic States. By D. K. Henderson, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, University of Edinburgh; Physician-Superintendent, Royal Edinburgh Hospital for Nervous and Mental Disorders. Chapman & Hall. Pp. 178. 8/6.

Here we have a subject which, under various labels, has defied adequate definition. It is easier to say what psychopathic states are not, rather than what they are, and therefore this classification has been liable to be used as a dumping ground for conditions which do not conform to established clinical entities. The term psychopathic state does not apply to individuals who are mentally defective or frankly psychotic, but in Professor Henderson's words those "who throughout their lives, or from a comparatively early age, have exhibited disorders of conduct of an anti-social or asocial nature, usually of a recurrent or episodic type, which, in many instances, have proved difficult to influence by methods of social, penal and medical care and treatment. . . ." He speaks of "an instability, queerness, explosiveness, intuitiveness and egocentricity which form the picture of the psychopathic states".

This book, which is based on the Thomas W. Salmon Memorial Lectures given by the author, is divided into three main parts; the place of psychopathic states in Psychiatry, their clinical manifestations, and the needs for social rehabilitation. It is a strong plea for the study, understanding and remedial care of these cases. The author attempts the difficult task of classifying these states and suggests that they fall into three groups, based on personality types, namely, those who are predominantly aggressive, pre-dominantly inadequate and predominantly creative. He inevitably raises the question of the relative importance of and relation between innate qualities and environmental influences in the causation of conduct disorders, and while not detailing his argument, seems to hold the view that constitutional loading is a more important factor than is generally recognised.

A particularly interesting feature is the illustrative clinical material in the form of numerous pithy case histories, and the book as a whole, with its practical appeal to all workers in the mental health field, is constantly stimulating of thought.

F. H.

Psychological Methods of Healing. By William Brown, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.C.P.

University of London Press, 7/6.

The preface states that this book aims at outlining the main schools of thought in medical psychology, and giving an accurate statement of the writer's own views. It fulfils its aim, although it would seem that the several chapters on suggestion, hypnosis, etc., might well have been condensed and run together; whereas in their present form (where papers delivered at various conferences are reported) the subject occupies too large a space in relationship to the rest of the book. Thus laymen may be led to think too much of suggestion methods and too little of analytical, although the latter are usually admitted to be far more fundamental and important.

Dr. Brown makes a clear case of the correct way to use hypnosis, i.e., as a means of getting the patient to relax the convulsive grip by means of which he keeps dissociated material out of sight, and so allowing him to bring it to the surface. And the point is made that hypnosis can only legitimately be used in such a way as gradually to diminish the ability of the therapist to hypnotise his patient, because he is becoming a more integrated and positive personality as a result of it: a point too little regarded by many so-called psychotherapists.

For the rest, we are given a clear outline of Freud's and Adler's psychologies, and an adequate though necessarily incomplete study of Jung, with critical comments on these. The only point at which I join issue with the author is in over-valuing the Oedipus Complex, by taking it as a radical factor in the causation of neurosis and giving it an absolute value, instead of seeing