Hysteria. By Ernst Kretschmer. Translated by O. H. Boltz (Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph Series, No. 44). New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company. 1926. Pp. 120. Price not stated.

In this admirable essay on hysteria the author draws attention to the resemblance of hysterical symptoms to reflex reactions and other low level motor mechanisms. He also points out how such reflex reactions may be intensified by a voluntary effort. This is exemplified by the chattering of the teeth often playfully indulged in by children, or the leg clonus which can be maintained if the muscles are in a hypertonic state. He points out that this voluntary effort, which he terms the 'hypoboulic' will, is distinct from higher 'volition' in so far as it is vague in its direction but intense in its application, having the 'all-or-none' character of other lower psychic manifestations. At best it may serve to maintain and intensify higher volition, but under the influence of shock or conflict the two types of will may come into opposition either coincidently or in alternation. This is what happens in hysteria. Many of his examples are drawn from war cases, of course on the German side. The effort to bring the explanation of neurotic symptoms into line with processes familiar in other fields of the physiology of the nervous system without insistence on structural lesions is commendable and stimulating. This essay should be carefully studied by all those interested in the psychoneuroses.

R. G. Gordon.


This slender volume is very welcome. Written by a psychiatrist of wide experience, its purpose is to make the results of psychiatry available for general psychological enquiry and to emphasise the value and significance of the approach to normal mental processes from the psychopathological side. Further, it stresses the importance for the psychiatrist of the foundation of medical training in the knowledge of fundamental physiological laws, which hold good and are applicable wherever we find the functioning of the living organ, and which are certainly apposite when we come to consider the function of the mind.

The author distinguishes in every psychical process three essentially different elements: intellectual activity, feeling, and will. This division is confirmed by the findings of psychopathology. He is at pains to demonstrate, in respect of these three elements, that their psychical constituents correspond