

BOOK REVIEWS

A TEXTBOOK OF MENTAL DEFICIENCY

A. F. Tredgold

(London. Bailliere, Tindall, and Cox. Seventh Edition. Pp. xvi+534, with 47 plates. Price 30s. net.)

No aspect of medicine better supports the view of "busy common sense" that brain is the organ of mind than does the study of mental deficiency; and it is a subject of growing interest to both neurologists and psychiatrists. For the neurologist, the renewed enquiries into cortical cyto-architecture that Lashley and his colleagues have begun will ultimately establish a more clear-cut picture of normal cortical histology against which the ament brain will also have to be re-assessed; and application of the more searching psychometric tests which have become available in the last few decades may well provide an advance in the correlation of brain structure and function. For the psychiatrist, the importance of the constitutional factor in the aetiology of mental disease which is once more being emphasized, is even more firmly underlined and more readily studied in mental deficiency practice. From the latest edition of Dr. Tredgold's *Mental Deficiency* it would seem that the material for such practice is on the increase. Yet it is an unhappy fact that the Mental Deficiency Acts of 1913 and 1927 are still to a large extent rendered nugatory by the lack of adequate buildings and staff to deal with defectives.

This new edition of a well-established work remains a thorough and well-balanced introduction to the subject, and when the author argues for views which are not generally accepted he makes it clear in the text. Thus, on the subject of aetiology he still supports the hypothesis of germ corruption, though it is difficult at times to see in his arguments any necessary differentiation between this and the more generally accepted theory of specific gene abnormality. For permutation and combination of individual genes allows of almost limitless variation and gradation in the phenotype.

The section on psychology is essentially an eclectic and common-sense one, and no attempt is made to discuss the mental mechanisms of aments in terms of Freudian or Meyerian psycho-pathology.

The discussion on pathology is as full as it can be, but reflects the general paucity of information on the range of normal of both histological and biochemical aspects of brain.

The clinical descriptions and varieties of primary amentia are detailed, clear-cut, and memorable. Mongolism is included in the primary group, and few would disagree with this. The aetiology of this condition is discussed at some length. It is understandable that the causes of such a well-defined clinical syndrome should

be of special interest, but it may be doubted whether F. G. Crookshank's aetiological "jeu d'esprit" deserves even the small amount of discussion it gets. The group of secondary amentias is also fully treated. On the relationship between epilepsy and amentia the author holds the view that there is an amentia which is induced by epilepsy. There is, however, little unequivocal evidence in support of this, for even when epilepsy precedes the amentia the two may still be unconnected, the latter being genetically determined but of late onset as in the dementia of Huntingdon's chorea.

In the description of mental tests space perhaps might have been found for mention of the "factorial" approach of the Spearman school, for such an approach may well find an application in the investigation of the "idiots savants" so interestingly reviewed in a separate chapter.

In a very full discussion of the problem of moral defectives the author appears to agree with the widespread view that in most cases the lack of "wisdom" or "common sense" shown by these persons is of such a nature as to suggest intellectual defect, even though this is not demonstrable by intelligence tests.

The vexed question of the McNaughten Rules is once again brought up, and the author argues cogently for their revision. Most doctors and a growing body of lawyers are with him in this.

Finally Dr. Tredgold puts forward decided views on the eugenic aspect of mental deficiency. Ever since the first edition of his book in 1908 he has championed the need for limiting the propagation of this stock. However much we agree or disagree with his view, the sociological implications of the facts he brings forward must be a matter of concern to every thoughtful citizen.

Dr. Tredgold has seen the issue of seven editions of his work over a period of nearly 40 years, and for many years now it has been recognized both here and in the U.S.A. as one of the standard introductory works on the subject. The present edition ensures that it will maintain this high position.

PSYCHIATRIC RESEARCH

By C. K. Drinker and others

(Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press. London: Geoffrey Cumberlege. 1947. pp. 113. Illustrations and diagrams. Price \$2 or 11s. 6d.)

This is a collection of six addresses delivered at the McLean Hospital, Massachusetts, on the opening of a laboratory for biochemical research in psychiatry. As might be expected, the approach to the main theme differs very much from one address to another. Only two deal solely with specific psychiatric problems: these are the contributions of Wilder Penfield on

"Psychical Seizures," and of Jordi Folch on "Biochemical Problems related to Psychiatry." The subject of the first of these—the psychomotor variants of the epileptic seizure—lies on the indeterminate boundary that divides neurology from psychiatry. Penfield correlates the clinical characteristics of the seizures with cortical areas and electro-encephalographic findings. The second paper, by Folch, is a survey of recent research on the chemistry of the brain. Of the six papers, it is the one of greatest scientific interest and is followed by sixty-five references to the growing literature of this subject. Dr. Folch is to be the director of the new laboratory.

Stanley Cobb, in "Integration of Medical and Psychiatric Problems," describes the work done in the psychiatric ward of the Massachusetts General Hospital since 1934; the latter half of his paper deals with the researches into neurocirculatory asthenia carried out in his department during that period.

The remaining three papers are discussions of psychiatric research in more general terms. Drinker's contribution is an historical survey of the development of the department from the original McLean Asylum, founded in 1818 under the directorship of Dr. Rufus Wyman. Strecker, in "The Psychobiology of Psychiatric Research," issues a warning against the all-too-common tendency to diagnose and treat mental illness on the basis of a single cause, and he pleads for a corresponding breadth of vision in approaching problems of research. In the remaining paper, "Protocol for a Review of Psychiatry," Gasser discusses in general the evolution

of the scientific method and ends his address with a graceful tribute to the research already done at the McLean Hospital.

NEOCORTEX OF MACACA MULATTA

G. von Bonin and P. Bailey

(University of Illinois Press, 1947. Pp. 163; Illustrated. \$4.00 paper bound, \$5.00 cloth bound.)

Illinois Monographs in the Medical Sciences,
Vol. 5, No. 4.

Neurophysiologists have in recent years become increasingly concerned regarding the inaccuracies contained in the widely accepted cytoarchitectural descriptions of the mammalian cortex. The authors of this study have therefore made a determined effort to describe and illustrate (with the aid of 62 plates) the structure of the various cortical regions in the Macaque monkey. Neurologists will be disappointed to read that they have found the well-known Brodmann's numerical system to be so inaccurate that they have felt obliged with reluctance to abandon his method in favour of Economo's symbols. The authors are impressed with the similarity in cortical organization between the macaque and man, and emphasize the evidence that the structural pattern of cortical organization is essentially the same in all primates and perhaps in all mammals. Hence the importance of a study such as this, and many will feel indebted to the authors for clarifying a difficult subject.