

BOOK REVIEWS

BACTERIOLOGY IN NEUROPSYCHIATRY

Nicholas Kopeloff, Ph.D.

(Springfield and Baltimore Charles C. Thomas. 1941. Pp. 316. 25s.)

The subject-matter of this book deals with bacteriological and immunological aspects of diseases of known and of unknown ætiology and with primary and secondary involvement of the nervous system in the group of diseases of known causation. Many of this last group are of little interest to the neurologist or the psychiatrist, and some space is also used in quoting references to delirium in association with a large variety of diseases discussed.

The author gives a short, even in some cases scanty, description of the causal organism if such exists, with the pathology and experimental work relating thereto, and the symptoms and treatment of each disease discussed. Most of the experimental work referred to is recent and a large proportion of it is from American workers.

The conclusions reached in the part relating to mental disorders is almost entirely of a negative nature, but this is hardly surprising in view of the degree of reliability of the work discussed.

A portion of the book is devoted to such conditions as anaphylaxis, serum sickness, and allergy, and it is suggested that allergy may play some part in migraine.

As a whole the book is rather disappointing to the bacteriologist and even to the neurologist, as its title leads one to believe that bacteriology will be the dominant feature. A reasonably exhaustive and useful series of references is given.

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE TECHNIQUE OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

Edward Glover, with the assistance of Marjorie Brierley

(Baillière, Tindall, and Cox, London. 1940. Pp. 188. 10s. 6d.)

This candid book was compiled from the answers sent by twenty-four practising psycho-analysts to a series of questions asking them details of their technique. Technique in psycho-analysis goes hand in hand with theory, on which the members of this group would in the main be in agreement, yet the report here presented shows how diverse was their procedure. On the interpretation of material presented by the patient there are four illuminating chapters; the attitude of the analyst and his ways of influencing the relationship between himself and the patient are dealt with in two further chapters on "Transference and Routine." Other topics are the indications for terminating the analysis, the criteria of success, methods used for analyzing the insane, and the relation of theory to practice: appendices give the questionnaires used and the condensed outcome of the inquiry.

Useful as this inquiry may be to psycho-analysts, its value is by no means small to those who only read the literature of the subject and hear the views of adherents to the Freudian school, since it enables them to get some idea of the workshops in which the Freudian theories and observations are arrived at, and gives them a chance to appraise the validity of such methods.

SHELL SHOCK IN FRANCE 1914-18

Charles S. Myers

(Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1940. Pp. 146. 4s. 6d.)

This little book contains two chapters on the nature and treatment of neuroses in soldiers, and an account of the problems Dr. Myers met when advising on the administrative steps necessary for dealing with such illness in France and at home. A feeling of frustrated effort is perceptible in the personal part of the narrative.

THE COLLECTED PAPERS OF WILFRED TROTTER, F.R.S.

(Oxford University Press. 1941. Pp. 194. 10s. 6d.)

Philosophy has been defined as the study of all knowledge with the object of discovering unities and principles common to every branch of human endeavour, common to all man's attempts to understand himself and his environment (including the minute analyses that science makes). It may further attempt to discover a meaning in natural phenomena. When undertaken by professional philosophers the results do not always or even often, add to the understanding of such principles, since the professional begins by studying the ancient systems, with many elisions and compressions of a body of knowledge too vast already for any man's complete assimilation. Trained in a world of ideas he can scarcely produce or teach anything but abstractions. For this reason it is possible that the only admissible philosophers of the future will be those who have received a thorough and practical training in science in one of its forms. Training in the arts and æsthetics is a less permissible portal of entry since these belong more clearly to psychology, so far as they have commerce with anything else. The plain fact is that a great quantity of philosophy is completely out of date and in need of vigorous pruning. This is a really urgent need. It is significant that the most important philosophical contributions of the last two decades have been of the applied kind (Whitehead, Bertrand Russell, Sherrington). It would be too much to expect that all the contributions of an applied type should be first-rate; some of the philosophy that has come recently from the pens of our biologists is undistinguished.

These essays of Wilfred Trotter's are the most important contributions to what we may for the moment term "applied philosophy," and indeed three of them (Nos. 7, 9, and 10) seem to the present writer to be the most penetrating that anybody has written. By his too early death we have lost further and deeper incursions into the realms of pure or professional philosophy. He has already given indications which should influence its course, when the import of his message becomes widely known. Trotter's main contentions concern the fallibility of the mind, of the intellect as a reasoning instrument. Reason can propound a philosophy such as Berkeley's which cannot be disproved but which common sense will always reject. Trotter in his essays uses the modernized language of philosophy. Anyone accustomed to reading philosophy will immediately recognize that the manner of presentation and argument is exactly that of the professional philosopher. He will be grateful for two qualities very uncommon elsewhere, the extreme clarity of the writing and its conciseness. The simplicity and gracefulness of the diction hide the difficulty of the thought expressed.

The finality of these essays is astonishing and amongst the most important is his judgment of the place of medicine in the scientific hierarchy. His criticism of the scientific attitude, of the fallacies latent in philosophic doubt and suspended judgment, is masterly and provides memorable passages. He finds reason to criticize the methods of science itself, without in any sense belittling its achievements. Whitehead had on an even more comprehensive scale done much the same with perfect justice.

Speculation was highly valued by Trotter, though these papers must be carefully read to get the author's exact estimation of it. It is interesting, however, to observe that the only insecure parts in Trotter's own scientific work proved to be in the speculative sphere (e.g. his theory of concussion). We can imagine that he would have accepted the correction with tolerance, for who knew or exposed better than he the infirmities of the intellect, the insecurity of the Reason so beloved by Descartes, Berkeley, Kant, and so many philosophers, earlier and later. His last essay on this subject should become a classic, not only because of its subject-matter but for the beauty of its presentation.

This book will probably appeal less to the young than to their seniors. The former will be deceived by the apparent casualness and obviousness of the themes, which hide so great an intellectual achievement. But the older will ask themselves where they can read the like again and regret the impossibility.