with the variety of interpretation given by adherents of differing schools of psychopathology. She thinks that in the proper use of art therapy it is essential to pay more attention to the patients' interpretation of their own symbolic creations rather than to interpret for them.

The book is beautifully produced, with an abundance of illustrations, many of them in colour, to go with the text. It will be of value to those engaged in the field of psychotherapy, and to many others who have an interest in psychopathology and in the nature of creative art. W. S. MACLAY.

**Wisdom, Madness and Folly. The Philosophy of a Lunatic.** By JOHN CUSTANCE. London: Gollancz, 1951. Pp. 254. Price 16*s*.

Mr. Custance, who is now in his early fifties, had had half-a-score sharp attacks of simple mania and acute melancholia since his thirties. He is a man of education, who has read widely in the fields of psychology and philosophy, and who has the individualism, humanity and sensitivity that are so often part of the cyclothymic personality. He writes well and he writes clearly, even though much of his book was written when he was emerging from hypomanic phases.

Unlike some sufferers he has not sought to forget his illnesses, nor has he brooded on them as tragic and wasteful interludes. Instead, he has gloried in the opportunity to examine the unconscious content of his mind, and the relationship of his psychotic phenomena to real events. He has formulated a philosophical "Theory of Actuality," which emphasizes the "reality" of hallucinations and delusions, and leads him to state that the inner experiences of psychotics are different from those of mystics, leaders and prophets only because the latter have the spiritual and intellectual capacities to comprehend and make use of their experiences.

Although the author would certainly assess his theory as the most important part of his book, psychiatrists will value other parts more highly. The clinical descriptions of his manic and depressed states of mind are sensitive and revealing, but even more valuable are his accounts of how and why he reacted emotionally to enforced hospitalization; after reading these there will be few hospital psychiatrists who will not have gained deeper insight into the minds of their patients. Mr. Custance freely admits that when he was manic he must have been a difficult patient; even so he was unlucky in some of the hospitals, doctors and nurses he encountered, and it is sad that he still feels great resentment over the certification procedure he underwent. He makes many practical suggestions for the better organization of mental hospitals, but most of his ideas are already being followed in progressive hospitals. HUNTER GILLIES.

**The Electrical Activity of the Nervous System.** By MARY A. B. BRAZIER. London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1951. Pp. 220. Price 25*s*.

The book is intended for students, and covers the field adequately though not exhaustively. It first surveys the electrical changes observed in the axon when an impulse passes, and then proceeds through related topics such as the excitability of nerve, the propagation of the nerve impulse, transmission at synapses, the electrical responses to the stimulation of sense organs, and the cortical responses to peripheral stimulation; finally the author gives a survey of the normal and abnormal electroencephalograms of man.

The descriptions of the various types of electrical activity are well integrated so that the relations can be clearly seen. At all points where further discussion would become too detailed, a well-selected bibliography shows the student where further information is to be found.

No other book presents the same information on this important subject. Dr. Brazier's book can be confidently recommended to those who require an accurate and readable account. W. ROSS ASHBY.

**Principles of General Psychopathology.** By SIEGFRIED FISCHER, M.D. New York: Philosophical Library, 1950. Pp. 327. Price $4.75.

Having devoted nearly two-thirds of his book to describing and classifying isolated concepts of normal psychology and related symptoms of psychopathology, the author says, "This kind of psychology has been called the 'psychology without soul.' It does not satisfy our desire and ambition to understand people, and to gain a close insight into their behaviour."

The rest of the book is not very inspiring either ; which is strange, for the author undoubtedly thinks clearly, has assimilated what he quotes of the work of others, and writes, with a pleasing balance of words, in reasonably short sentences.

This book gives a level-headed introduction to general psychopathology, but is not likely " to stimulate the student to see the problems of this science." The difficulty is that Dr. Fischer has written " An Interpretation of the Theoretical Foundations of Psychopathological Concepts " without the necessary inspiration for such an ambitious work.

C. E. H. TURNER.

**More about Psychiatry.** By CARL BINGER, M.D. London : George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1951. Pp. 201. Price 10*s*. 6*d*.

In this book are delightful essays, collected into sections on psychosomatic medicine, psychiatry and the world situation. The essays on psychosomatic medicine are excellent, those on the world situation slightly less so ; but to write sensibly on the world situation is even more difficult than to write sensibly on psychosomatic medicine.

Information, wisdom and humour are in these essays, which are written in good English ; Dr. Binger's book is so rich in content, easily set forth, that one wishes to re-read it.

It is a book for a psychiatrist to give to a medical or lay friend whom he wishes to please and interest in psychiatry. Or, perhaps the psychiatrist would be lucky enough to have a wife who thought to make him a present of this little book.

C. E. H. TURNER.

**Psychosomatics and Suggestion Therapy in Dentistry.** By JACOB STOLZENBERG, D.D.S. New York: Philosophical Library, 1950. Pp. 152. Price $3.75.

This book is not a profound contribution to psychosomatic medicine. The author emphasizes instead, that patients do not look forward with pleasure to being in the dentist's chair. The dentist should therefore make himself presentable and use every possible device of suggestion, including, if need be, hypnosis, to set the patient at ease.

The book is simple, superficial and full of " pep." " It is almost unbelievable how simple it is for the dentist to treat the most neurotic patient if handled properly." The author's writing is sometimes stilted—" In a superficial way, I have touched upon the various segments that make up the whole cycle of integrate phases which will lead to successful practice with resulting contentment."

C. E. H. TURNER.

**New Outlook on Mental Diseases.** By F. A. PICKWORTH. Bristol: John Wright & Sons, 1952. Pp. 296, with 9 plates and 41 illustrations. Price 60*s*.

Dr. Pickworth has long been known as the initiator of a new conception of capillary function in the cerebral cortex, which he has studied for twenty-five years. A clear account of what he has found would therefore be sure of a welcome. His main thesis is that the cerebral capillary is not just a way for metabolites to and from the neuron but is an active agent in the cerebral dynamics, reacting to the patterns of incoming impulses and, by its active changes, affecting the patterns that develop.

The possibility has received little attention from other workers, but it should not be dismissed off-hand. Until recently we have not appreciated in the brain the truly amazing degree it achieves in what the electronic engineer calls " miniaturization." To the anatomist, the fact that the human brain can go into a half-gallon jar is a commonplace—to the designer of calculating machines it is a miracle. The brain works, in fact, on a scale of volume that is about a thousand-millionth part of that of the engineer. This tremendous compression suggests that the brain works with great efficiency, making every possible use of what it already has rather than adding a new part for every new requirement.

Now a fact on which Dr. Pickworth rightly lays emphasis is that while the times taken by the actions of neuron and fibre are measured in milliseconds, the times taken by the subsequent actions of the whole organism are measured in seconds, or even in minutes. To change the time-unit from millisecond to minute there must exist some slowing or delaying mechanism. What could be more suitable than the cortical capillary ? It lies in intimate contact with the neurons, it is sensitive to many influences, it affects, or can be made to affect, the neuron's