

discussion at the Conference. The subject is both important and practical, and the various contributions contained in the report merit the close attention of those who are called upon to deal with cases coming under the provisions of the Mental Deficiency Act.

Sir Bryan Donkin, in his introductory remarks as Chairman of the Conference, brings into prominence the difficulty of attempting to formulate exact definitions in the differentiation of "normal" and "feeble-minded," or of attempting to establish a hard and fast line between them. Such cases as come under observation cannot be judged by the intellect alone. He truly points out, "It is a matter of *defect of mind* in all, as evidenced chiefly by careful and often prolonged observation of conduct, and by study of the history in each case, leading to an inference of the incapacity of the subjects to adjust themselves effectively to their social surroundings." Actual "mental tests" for mental deficiency can hardly be more than one factor in arriving at a conclusion as to the status and course of treatment indicated in any given case. The most reliable test is, after all, actual life, which reveals more truly than anything else the individual's mental capacity.

Within the limits indicated in the subject for discussion the papers cover a wide field. This may be briefly indicated by a list of the titles and contributors.

"A Scheme for the Detection and Treatment of Mentally Defective School Children," Dr. Robert Hughes.

"The Detection of Mental Deficiency on the Large Scale in School Children," W. H. Winch, District Inspector of Schools, London County Council.

"Emploi des tests de Binet et Simon chez les Enfants Anormaux Anglais et Belges," Dr. Boulenger.

"What Tests in Childhood are best Calculated to Throw Light Upon their Capacities for Future Work," Dr. W. A. Potts.

"The Value of a Uniform Examination of the Feeble-minded for Education Purposes," Dr. Allan Warner.

"Practical Application of the Binet Tests," R. L. Langdon Down.

"The Binet-Simon Tests as a Means of Grading Mental Defectives under the Mental Deficiency Act," Dr. W. B. Drummond.

"The Classification of the Mentally Defective as regarded from a Legal Standpoint under the Mental Deficiency Act," Dr. E. B. Sherlock.

"The Characteristics and Identification of the Feeble-minded Criminal," Dr. Charles Goring.

"Classification of the Mentally Defective from an Administrative Point of View," Dr. H. W. Sinclair.

All these papers are essentially practical in character and will repay a careful study.
H. D.

Wishfulfilment and Symbolism in Fairy Tales. By DR. FRANZ RICKLIN.
Translated by Dr. W. A. White. New York: Nervous and Mental Diseases Publishing Co., 1915. Pp. 90. Roy. 8vo.

It is well known that from the Freudian standpoint fairy tales are constituted in somewhat the same manner as dreams, on the basis of the unconscious, and that they thus form the material for a psychology which may be brought into line with that of hysteria and mental disease.

This idea stimulated Dr. Ricklin, of Zurich, who admits that he was at the time a novice in the field of fairy tales, to the present investigation. A student with broader philological and historical knowledge, could, he believes, have gained much more from the material, for fairy tales are the expression of the primitive human soul, and they express that general human tendency to wishfulfilment which in modern fiction appears in a much more garbled and complicated form.

In his general attitude the author ranges himself with Stoll and other authorities who refuse to accept the view that fairy tales can be accounted for by migration from some story-telling centre. They arise among different people, in different places, and at different times, by suggestive and auto-hypnotic processes which independently lead to more or less identical results. "Only the psychic foundation is everywhere the same." It is, therefore, all the more remarkable, in Ricklin's opinion, that the sexual element plays so large a part in fairy tales, and that the sexual symbolism they reveal agrees so closely with that found in dreams and in psycho-pathology.

As from the Freudian standpoint the unconscious can do nothing but wish, and as wishing is the business of dreams, Dr. Ricklin finds, as one might expect, that the fairy tale is, above all, "a wishfulfilling structure," often gathering its material from widely separate sources, from other fairy tales, and from myths. Similarly the psychoses produce wish-structures in which the patients are rich and powerful and of royal descent, marry royal personages, and witness the destruction of their rivals and enemies. Wish-structures can, indeed, occur in a number of clinical forms, in cataleptic states, in mimic automatism, in the progressive development of delusional systems.

Innumerable fairy tales (as well as myths) tell of magic gifts and qualities created by the human wish-phantasy. These are often devised as the therapy of a sorrowing heart. Ricklin quotes several beautiful fairy tales of the type of *The Shroud* in the Grimm collection, which tells how a mother wept for her dead child until the child came to her in vision, and told her that he could not rest in the grave for her tears had made his shroud so wet. The mother ceased crying, the child came again to say that now he could rest, and henceforth the mother was comforted. The wish-structure is very evident in the case of the common fairy tale of the peasant girl who marries a prince, or the shepherd boy a princess. Other tales reveal a vast variety of methods for bettering human deficiencies: seven-league boots, gold-producing animals, enchanted mirrors, magic wands, etc. The stepmother tales, of which Cinderella is the type, similarly illustrate the wish-structure. In this way such tales resemble dreams. In reading some of them, indeed, the author remarks, we find they might well be the relation of the dreams of a patient with hysteria or dementia præcox.

The author finds illustration of other Freudian doctrines in fairy tales. Special attention is devoted to "transposition upward," by which the lower physical processes are raised on to a higher plane, and the sexual organs may, for instance, become the mouth. Psycho-analysts have found this process common in the dreams of insane, and, indeed, of normal persons. Ricklin would thus interpret the large number of fairy tales in which women became pregnant through eating or drinking

some special food or liquids. With this "transposition upward" are associated infantile sexual theories, also illustrated by fairy tales; it has indeed been argued that such masking of sexual processes took its origin in the telling of fairy stories by women. Ricklin takes the orthodox Freudian view that this infantilism, whether in dreams or legends, is the expression of the censored wish of the unconscious.

The essay is of interest as an early attempt to study a new branch of comparative psychology, although, as such attempts are apt to be, it is often more suggestive than convincing. The author makes it quite clear, however, that fairy tales form as good material as dreams for the application of Freudian methods, and that indeed the material has considerable resemblance to dreams.

It must be said that the translation, though fluent and intelligible, is often careless and sometimes ungrammatical.

H. E.

Part III.—Epitome of Current Literature.

1. Physiological Psychology.

The Constitution of Ideas and the Physiological Basis of Mental Processes
[*Constitution des idées et base physiologique des processus psychiques*].
(*Revue Philosophique*, No. 10, October, 1915.) Delage, Yves.

In this paper M. Delage formulates a theory by which he proposes to explain mental activity in terms of our present knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the brain. Starting with the assumption that the cortical neurons are the organ of thought, he maintains that by analysing our ideas introspectively we shall find it possible to reduce them all, even the most abstract, to combinations of a relatively limited number of constituent elements. Each of these elements is supposed to be represented by a single neuron, and an idea is then defined as "the cerebral condition created by the entry into activity of the neurons or groups of neurons corresponding to the several elements that constitute it." From each neuron when actively functioning, dynamic influences radiate in all directions, affecting slightly those neurons which are in repose, more intensely such other neurons as are simultaneously active. Further, the conducting paths along which the more intense influences pass more frequently become thereby more permeable, so that ideas which have often occurred together, *i.e.*, whose correspondent groups of neurons have frequently been active simultaneously, tend to become associated and to call one another up. In this way it is possible to conceive part of the cerebral mechanism underlying the association of ideas and the processes of memory and recognition. To penetrate further into this mechanism, the author goes for an analogy to Lapique's theory of the chronaxial rhythm in muscle and nerve. Lapique showed experimentally that the muscles in different animal species and different sorts of muscle in the same animal differ in their electrical excitability, and that similar differences exist likewise in motor nerves; and on this fact he based the hypothesis that individual motor neurons also present specific modes of vibratory activity. Extending