

O. Kinberg's contribution on the "Biological infrastructure of the criminal act as a basis of an objective criminogeny". He fails, however, to carry conviction that an expansion of Lhermitte's observations on punctate cerebral damage in encephalitides, married to an hypothesis of afferent and/or efferent pathway interruption can yet, or in the visible future, lead us to the understanding implicit in the title—the more so, as Professor Kinberg steadfastly asserts that in the neuro-cerebral pathways there is no point at which the psychic circuits can be intercalated. But let it be said that Dr. Kinberg puts forward his ideas as foreshadowings and no more.

The second section, the psychiatrist in the penitentiary, opens with a racy attack by the First Secretary to the Ministry of Justice—M. Cornil, upon the practical contribution actually made by psychiatry and psychiatrists to the day-to-day problems confronting the prison administrators in dealing with prisoners. It is much more stimulating reading than the reply which comes later. Much of this section has to do with Belgian domestic matters, but Miss Tuerlinckx, a social worker, the first female to work in the Central Prison at Louvain, the site of Dr. de Greef's life-long labours, is given the opportunity, and takes it, of recalling her first reactions to her work which she succeeded in being allowed to undertake. There is also included a chapter on case history taking and Extended Observation on children.

It is in this section too, that Dr. E. de Greef writes his paper, essentially a consideration of three men, each of whom murdered his wife. The material is of great interest, and its interpretation by Dr. de Greef, open to much argument. He notes, for instance, that in two cases the homicidal act was quite out of character with the general life pattern of the culprit, and that the prisoner was admitted in a state of mind and outlook which was foreign to him, slowly resolved in two or three years or more and could then be seen to have existed for a significant time before the crime, insidiously worsening. Dr. de Greef sees all this as evidence of a moral deterioration in the individual, which is capable of recovery if he be put in satisfactory conditions; prison (and, according to the criticism of M. Cornil, solitary confinement), being satisfactory. Dr. de Greef indicates that his contacts with these three chosen cases are few and far between.

The last section of the book is devoted to medico-legal considerations by psychiatrists, including contributions by Zilboorg, who touches on some of the main points made in his Isaac Ray memorial lectures (reviewed in these columns about 15 months ago) concerning the evolution of anglo-saxon medico-legal thought on the topic of legal tests of responsibility. He brings matters up to date by quoting the 1954 reformulation of an American Court—that of Columbia—in which the establishment of mental illness and the origin therein of the criminal act, becomes the test to be applied.

Much hard thinking and writing has gone into this tribute to Professor de Greef, and there is much that is admirable, but some of it is obscured by the generality of approach and argument, and by the lack of clarity of the topic of argument, when murder, delinquency and criminality are used without indication with separate and synonymous meanings.

JONATHAN GOULD.

**Alcoholism.** By LINCOLN WILLIAMS. Livingstone, Edinburgh and London, 1956.

Dr. Lincoln Williams, in an essay of some 25,000 words, has attempted gallantly, and with considerable success, to convey an impression of that field of concern that is called alcoholism. At a time when psychiatric literature is not specially notable for its freshness and spontaneity, it is pleasing that Dr. Williams' monograph retains much of the flavour of cursive discussion, such as might go on between more and less experienced physicians engaged in the same field. It is this quality of directness, of lack of dogmatic authoritativeness, carrying yet that air of confidence of one who knows from a wealth of experience, which leads the reader to forgive with ease the occasional digression of the short chapters, from the title, to other no less interesting topics. And the chapters are short—at times, less than 500 words! Indeed, the book,

which is well printed and easily read in an afternoon, is described as a manual—and could well serve as a light comment on some trends in medical literature nowadays.

The author, like all workers in such a field, has his special interests, and these persuade him to give a relatively extensive consideration to certain methods of treatment (which are admittedly successful only in the hands of the much experienced) and yet to give insufficient information for the tyro to undertake the techniques. Nevertheless, the general approach is stimulating and interesting—and is redolent of clinical practice, whence, once, the best medical literature sprang.

JONATHAN GOULD.

**Etiology of Chronic Alcoholism.** Edited by OSCAR DIETHELM. Published by Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Illinois and Blackwells, Oxford, 1955.

A symposium on the *Etiology of Chronic Alcoholism*, edited by Dr. Oscar Diethelm, who also planned and directed the research programme, of which this book is the first-fruits, after some six years of labour by a large team representing several disciplines, approaches the problem from various aspects. These include clinical psychiatric descriptive studies, genetic studies including a comparison between American and Swiss patients; a social anthropological study of a quasi-segregated Chinese community in New York, in which alcoholism was not a significant problem, and a chapter on the biochemical characteristics of the blood of the alcoholic—giving perhaps new significance, in due course, to the phrase “the hair of the dog . . .”. The whole, is introduced by a chapter by Dr. Diethelm, in which he explains the premises of the work, defines his terms—particularly “chronic alcoholic” and “excessive drinker”—which definitions are employed in each succeeding chapter, being re-stated by the contributor.

Dr. Diethelm draws the broad picture of the work, indicating that there were aspects, such as the Rorschach studies, which could not be prepared in time for publication, but which he draws on, to the reader's interest, as in commenting that only four of the patients studied (76 current, and 85 case histories) corresponded to Rorschach's original description. The comparison between Rorschach results and biochemical investigation, however, each carried on independently of the clinical psychiatric study and of each other, gives positive agreement in a surprisingly high proportion of instances, where emotions of anxiety or resentment were concerned (90 per cent.). If Dr. Diethelm has a special interest in any aspect of his symposium, it would seem to be in connection with the work, reported by M. Freile Fleetwood, in the chapter on Biochemical Experimental Investigations of Emotions and Chronic Alcoholism, in which there is adduced evidence in support of the claim that there are to be found distinct chemical substances in the blood, in association with, and quantitatively varying with the intensity of, the moods of anxiety, tension and resentment.

These substances are (nor-) adrenaline-like, acetyl-choline-like, and another, dubbed “resentment-substance” which has an acetyl-choline-like effect on certain animal tissue preparations only after these have been submitted to the action of hyoscyamus with consequent destruction of acetyl-choline effect. (An acetyl-choline like compound is considered the tension substance.) The material offered in support of this thesis, is immense, and perhaps not readily assimilable to the clinician, who might well feel that, at times, generalizations are made from single instances, and that the whole thesis of “resentment-substance”, to which alcohol is deemed a specific biochemical and psychic antidote, is founded upon the responses of nine out of ten alcoholic patients, to whom whisky (six ounces) was given, four hours after breakfast. Another alcoholic patient became more resentful and suspicious, as was understandable in view of her history, and the concentration of “resentment-substance” rose. In two other alcoholics, who were atypical, in that they were not resentful, but anxious people, the concentration of anxiety-substance, not “resentment-substance”, was mainly affected. The general flavour of this chapter is that the biochemistry accounts for the psychic state, and that the alcoholic is distinctive in that he generates