

while to the expert, others may do little more than repeat what must be common knowledge. So long as so wide a field is covered in 230 pages, it is certain that much will perforce be dealt with in a very superficial way.

Nevertheless, a sound attempt is made here to cover the field. The psychologist's role, both as to play material and educational assistance, is excellently described by Miss Chesters and Miss Simmins. The psychiatrists deal with problems of adolescence, in girls by Dr. Laura Hutton, and in boys in an admirable essay by Dr. Miller. Dr. Paterson Brown's essay on "Habits" is particularly clear and concise, and is really written about children rather than about child psychology. Neuroses in school-children by Dr. Burns discusses points in practical methods and therapy, and Dr. Allen discusses personality deviations from the Freudian standpoint.

The essays would certainly afford an interesting basis for a series of lectures, followed by, and serving to introduce, discussion, but no indication is given that this was, in fact, their purpose originally. One is thus left with a somewhat haphazard impression as to how much can be learnt and understood as a result of reading this book.

E. M. CREAK.

Reading, Writing and Speech Problems in Children. By SAMUEL T. ORTON. London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1937. Price 10s. 6d. net.

Dr. Orton's work on the nature of reading, writing and speech problems in children deserves to be more widely known in this country than it is. Fortunately the occasion of the Salmon Memorial Lectures has given Dr. Orton an opportunity to collect and consider the outcome of his unrivalled experience in this field.

Dr. Orton has never deviated from his conception of the reading difficulty as part of an impairment in the development of the language function as a whole. His researches have done much if they have served to draw attention to the association sometimes of such problems as left-handedness and stammering, and mixed dominance and a failure to learn to read. All who are familiar with these cases in practice know how correct is his observation that one of the major difficulties experienced by these children is in the correct linkages of letter sequences in a word, whether read silently or spoken aloud, and his theory offers a comprehensive explanation, both for the group as a whole and the individual variations within the group.

No good, however, will be done by a theory which is valid only by assumptions. The physiological interpretations of the significance of cerebral dominance are more intriguing than they are convincing. Nevertheless, the spirochæte was suspected many years before it was found in the cortex of the general paralytic; perhaps some Noguchi of the future may succeed in locating the engram. While Dr. Orton has clearly withdrawn those assumptions which have proved untenable, it must be admitted that his conception, while clinically acceptable, is still a big pill for the cerebral physiologist to swallow. What he has undoubtedly added to our knowledge is the recognition of the syndrome of developmental language difficulty as a whole. A research based on ten years' painstaking work on nearly 1,000 cases cannot be lightly dismissed.

In discussing treatment, Dr. Orton is a convinced advocate of the phonetic method of teaching reading. It remains a fact that in skilled hands, even for the strephosymbolic, the "look and say" method may give excellent results in coaching and re-training. Possibly it is as true in this field as in

others in clinical psychiatry, that what is said to a child matters less than the way in which it is said, and it is a welcome addition to this work that in this volume due weight is given to the importance of emotional factors, acting in a child predisposed to such a language difficulty.

It is to be hoped that a yet fuller work will come from Dr. Orton's department. Freed from the necessity of describing his work in the form of spoken lectures, it is hoped that his next book will include a bibliography and an index, both conspicuously lacking in the present volume.

E. M. CREAK.

On Suicide [Der Selbstmord]. By R. WEICHBRODT. Basel, 1937. Pp. 252. Price 19 Swiss francs.

There is an excellent and comprehensive German bibliography of the gigantic literature on suicide, compiled by Rost a few years ago; but an up-to-date monograph on the subject has so far been missing. The book of Dr. Weichbrodt fills this gap. He tries to steer a middle course between a popular introduction and a scientific review of our present-day knowledge. In spite of the difficulty inherent in this course, the author succeeds in covering every possible aspect of suicide without piling up too much detail. The clear and unpretentious style makes the book especially pleasant to read.

Although a physician by profession, Weichbrodt devotes a considerable amount of space to suicide in its historical aspect and from the point of view of literature. The appendix, forming a quarter of the book, does not consist, as one might have expected, of statistical tables and diagrams, but contains the life-histories of five famous Germans who committed suicide, and writings on the subject by celebrities from Flavius Josephus to Schopenhauer.

The first part of the book deals with the history of suicide in different ages, religions and nations. A chapter on suicide and superstition concludes this part. The ideas of philosophers and poets on the subject are given in interesting and learned quotations. The facts on "suicide and law" are given in a short but comprehensive survey.

The second half of the book starts with statistics. Problems arising from the statistical methods and results are thoroughly discussed. A special chapter is devoted to suicide of soldiers, and the relation of suicide to mental abnormality is treated with expert knowledge. "Methods of suicide", "motives", "flirtation with the idea of suicide", and "suicide and love" are treated from a psychological angle. Dr. Weichbrodt's bird's-eye-view ends with a discussion on the influence of economics on suicide. In his conclusions he points to the relative incompleteness of our present knowledge, and emphasizes the difficulties in the way of prophylactic measures.

W. MAYER-GROSS.