

Part II.—Reviews

The Neurophysiological Basis of Mind. By J. C. ECCLES. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953. Figs. 89; pp. 314. 25s.

The book is an amplified version of eight lectures (the "Waynflete") delivered at Oxford last year. Professor Eccles has reviewed and amplified the lectures and has given the book the sub-title, "The Principles of Neurophysiology." As a survey of these principles the book can be unhesitatingly recommended. Matter, printing, binding and illustrations are all excellent.

Its eight chapters deal with ionic agents at the cellular membranes, both when resting and active, with synaptic transmission, central inhibition, the transmission of information, plasticity in the nervous system (as a basis of "memory"), and, finally, the cerebral cortex and the "mind-brain problem" (*sic*). The first six chapters, based almost entirely on studies of the peripheral nerve and spinal cord, are as good as present-day neurophysiology can make them. The last two chapters, however,—those on the cortex and its highest functions—fall off sadly, as so often happens when those who have spent much time studying the *minutiae* of the nervous system begin to consider its action as a whole; yet it is difficult to see, while present-day neurophysiology is limited to the study of the finest details in an organism carefully isolated from its environment, how the neurophysiologist's account could have been improved. The last two chapters, in fact, show only too clearly how ill adapted classical neurophysiology is to undertake the study of the brain's highest functions. At the moment it is far too concerned with details, and its technical resources are leading it only into the ever smaller. As a result, the neurophysiologist who starts to examine the highest functions is like a microscopist who, hearing that there are galaxies to be looked at, has no better resource than to point his microscope at the sky. He must not be surprised if he sees only a blur.

W. ROSS ASHBY.

A Text-book of Medical Psychology. By ERNST KRETSCHMER. Translated, with an Introduction by E. B. STRAUSS. London: The Hogarth Press, 1952. 30s.

It is to the credit of Dr. E. B. Strauss who translated the 4th edition in 1934 and introduced Kretschmer's *Medical Psychology* to the English-speaking practitioner, that this book and its comprehensive and undogmatic attitude is familiar to psychiatrists in this country. The present 2nd edition in English corresponds to the 10th German edition. Its basic views are entirely unchanged. For any reader who wants an introduction to psychopathology, or an unsystematic framework for his knowledge in this field, Kretschmer's open and adaptable approach should be welcome. He has been attacked for superficial brilliancy of his writings, for lack of precision in his methods and for the inadequacy of penetration into the subject-matters under discussion. If all this is conceded, one still feels behind the absorbing and original writer the clinician of the highest standing and great experience. Hence the suitability of this book, not only for the expert in search of an independent point of view, but also, as the translator points out, for the medical student and for the ancillary workers in psychiatry.

W. MAYER-GROSS.