

## Part II.—Reviews.

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*A Manual of Individual Mental Tests and Testing.* By AUGUSTA BRONNER, WILLIAM HEALY, GLADYS LOWE and MYRA SHINBERG. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1928. Demy 8vo. Pp. vii + 237. Price \$3.50.

The origin of mental testing is lost in antiquity, tests of skill in various performances being referred to in very early literature. Their formal use in this country dates back some centuries to the evidence that had to be produced before the jury that met to decide the mental capacity of anyone deemed incompetent from an early age to manage his affairs—*idiota ex nativitate*. On these occasions it would seem that the subject was asked such questions as the number of his brothers and sisters, and told to count a certain number of pence so that it might appear if he were aware what was to his profit and what to his loss! An interesting comment runs: "If he can read from study or information then it would appear he is not an idiot." Even in these early days a range of tests and their applicability to problems of daily life and the opportunities afforded the subject was deemed essential. Performance tests were elaborated in the early years of the last century by Itard and Seguin, partly as tests proper but partly as affording graduated sensory education. By the end of the century a wide range of tests was in use in psychiatric practice, but little had been done to standardize the methods of their presentation or to determine the normal variations arising from the age, sex or past experience of the subject. The attitude towards these features changed rapidly after the publication in *L'Année Psychologique* for 1906 of the memoir by Binet and Simon entitled "Méthodes nouvelles pour le diagnostic du niveau intellectuel des anormaux." Tests have multiplied, but so have the standards and scales based thereon; furthermore, from being a method of segregating defectives they have become recognized as a part of the necessary study of any individual presenting a mental problem. Just, however, as a knowledge of the basic intelligence is important for the evaluation of emotional reactions and personality traits, so it is recognized that affective and conative factors influence the response of the subject to the problems set him by the examiner. Variations in the emotional state either of subject or examiner have a material bearing on the responses elicited; the background of social environment and social experience form a matter for close consideration both in giving and in interpreting tests. There is abundant evidence that rating is influenced not only by special abilities and disabilities; by the

general state of health; by certain illnesses such as chorea, which lead to great irregularities in response, though often overlooked by the lay observer; by defect of vision or hearing, which are more easily noted; but also by all emotional factors, and this without going to the extreme position of believing that repressions may reduce the normal to an apparent level of feebleness of mind. It is necessary to pay some attention to variation in response to tests which are mainly linguistic and to those mainly concrete. In the past the more abstract type of intelligence has attracted more attention and has perhaps been unduly stressed. These considerations show that the routine use and scoring of an age-level scale without interpretation is by no means free from danger. It is essential not only to note a mere pass or fail, but to determine whether a given failure is due to lack of interest, unwillingness to respond, physical conditions, emotional inhibitions, or lack of capacity. Too often in the past it is to be feared the last explanation has been accepted without question. Again, full co-operation is needed, for the responses of the uncooperative subject are often meaningless.

Dr. Healy and his colleagues discuss all the difficulties connected with the choice of tests and the technique of examination; one section of the book deals with practical procedure, another with the interpretation of the tests, individually and as a whole. While it may be uncertain what mental abilities are tapped by any one test, by using several a general conclusion may be reached as to the powers of the subject. The extent of the minimum examination must vary according to the problem involved; for the mentally defective a simple schedule may suffice; for the vocational guidance or placement of the more intelligent far more extensive tests are needed, and if it be argued that this involves an undue expenditure of time and money, it may be pointed out that the consequences of action are so important that it is worth spending the additional hours in obtaining the knowledge requisite for a sound foundation for any recommendations.

For the supposed mentally defective a minimum study involves four fields—mental age, motor control and ability with concrete material, acquirement of school knowledge and common-sense information. The problems met by Dr. Healy with higher-grade children and adolescents include:

- (a) Determination of special abilities and disabilities.
- (b) Indications of psychotic trends.
- (c) Recommendations for "opportunity classes" where there is all-round ability but no special gifts or inclinations.
- (d) Advice on courses of study for those entering high school.
- (e) General vocational guidance.
- (f) Special problems such as a rise in defects in reading or in arithmetic.

Here, besides a broad general estimate, tests of specialized kinds are needed. The authors point out indeed that as time goes on the tendency is to lengthen rather than to shorten the schedule, though not of course to keep the subject under test conditions for

longer at a time. Again and again they point out that it is not merely the results but the method of attack that matters: keen observation of behaviour is essential, and the notes on "psychological observations" are the important part of the record.

It is impossible in the space of a short review to consider in detail the tests and groups of tests which are analysed and discussed. All those that have been found applicable to American conditions receive notice. Naturally the comments and norms given must be considered in the light of these conditions, and it must not be assumed absolutely that they could be used unmodified in the British Isles.

This book is one which should receive the attention of everyone who has to advise on children and young adults, and be a valuable addition to every psychological library. F. C. SHRUBSALL.

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*Performance Tests of Intelligence.* A Series of Non-linguistic Tests for Deaf and Normal Children. By JAMES DREVER, M.A., B.Sc., D.Phil., and MARY COLLINS, M.A., B.Sc.Edin., Ph.D. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1928. Demy 8vo. Pp. 52. Price 5s. net.

Mental testing of the deaf, especially if not of an age or degree of intelligence to read and follow directions, is difficult to carry out. Doubt always remains when the results come to be assessed. A similar difficulty arises in examining an alien who cannot speak or understand English when the services of a competent interpreter are not available. Intelligence tests of the Binet pattern imply the apprehension of language so that the deaf or illiterate or the alien are severely handicapped. Even in performance tests careful technique is required to ensure that the directions have "got across." Most of the earlier observations had suggested that the deaf were retarded in intelligence or in response as compared with normal children by anything from two to three or even four years. The authors have devised a special set of performance tests, or in some cases more accurate methods of presenting known performance tests, for the use of the deaf, but they warn would-be users, especially teachers of the deaf, that the directions must be rigidly adhered to, and the observer must be on his guard against unwittingly giving assistance by gesture or expression.

The tests for general use are the block-design, Knox cubes, domino test, size and weight test, manikin and profile test, form board tests, cube construction, and picture completion tests.

For each a special procedure has been elaborated and a special scale for scoring worked out. The results and norms established for deaf and normal children examined by the same procedure are as yet provisional, but those so far obtained go to show that the degree of retardation of the deaf has been somewhat exaggerated in the past, and that when the language factor is entirely eliminated