

The Inheritance of Mental Diseases. By ABRAHAM MYERSON. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1925. English agents: Baillière, Tindall & Cox. Demy 8vo. Pp. 336. Price 22s. 6d. net.

The objects of this book are clearly defined at the outset. The author has attempted to restore some sort of order out of the confused conceptions which have been allowed too long to obscure the issue in the investigation of the relation between heredity and mental disorders, and has sought to clear the ground by limiting his research to the biogenic psychoses, *viz.*, the manic-depressive psychosis, schizophrenia and allied states. As the book is intended for social workers, biologists and other laymen, as well as for the medical profession, several chapters are taken up with descriptions of the various clinical types met with in the practice of psychiatry. Dr. Myerson points out that a great amount of research has been vitiated by the fact that data have been collected and diagnoses made by workers who have lacked adequate training in psychiatry, and that psychopathy has been ascribed to ancestors and collaterals on the flimsiest of evidence (there is an amusing table of criticisms of Davenport's criteria of mental abnormalities on pp. 65 and 66). The story of the celebrated Kallikak family given by Goddard is shown to rest on equally scanty foundations.

The chapter headed "Five Important Mental Diseases" (dementia præcox, manic-depressive psychosis, paranoid psychoses, involution diseases and senile dementia) is of special interest in that the author calls attention to the different pictures shown by the "hospital" non-recoverable, and the "community" early, recoverable or arrested types. Dr. Myerson's general attitude towards the biogenic psychoses is expressed in the following words:

"It seems probable that in all the periods of life there occur three main types of mental disease. The one is a paranoic type, a disease with hostility, suspicion, a deluded interpretation of life around it, and a gross egoistic, over-evaluation of the self. The second is a dementing disease, whose prototype is dementia præcox, but which occurs in modified form in the involution and senile periods. The third is a disease marked mainly by a depressed mood, with lowered energy, absent interest and delusions of a depressive, apprehensive nature, occasionally associated with excitement and exaltation. The main disease of this type is manic-depressive insanity, but the involutional and senile melancholia are related diseases—perhaps the same disease coloured by the emotional and mental reactions of these periods of life.

"It might thus be stated that these three types of mental disease may occur at any period of life, in youth, maturity, involution or senium. Whatever is their cause, the less resistant individuals develop these conditions early, others more resistant hang out until the changes of the involution, and still more resistant individuals develop them late in life."

The second part of the book is devoted to the clinical reports upon which Dr. Myerson's conclusions are founded. He asks,

“ Given a certain type of mental disease in an ancestor, what form of mental disease is to be expected in his direct insane descendants ? ” As regards the paranoid psychoses, dementia præcox or paranoid states are more likely to appear in the insane descendants, with a distinct downward trend in intellectual capacity. Manic-depressives are most commonly followed by their like, though schizophrenic descendants may occur. While there is some evidence for anticipation, this factor is not stressed so strongly by Dr. Myerson as it was by Sir Frederick Mott. Insane stocks can be mended as well as ended, and the prognosis is not invariably downward to dementia præcox and imbecility.

As regards horizontal transmission, the clinical types of insane siblings, Dr. Myerson finds that the psychoses of brothers and sisters tend to be alike. Cases of supposed mental deficiency in a fraternity of schizophrenics are often cases of simple dementia præcox. The types of mental disorders of siblings are much more alike than those of parents and children.

Dr. Myerson's conclusions are based on a study of case-histories of 1,547 related individuals, representing 664 families admitted into Taunton State Hospital from 1854–1916. The criticisms as regards the collection and evaluation of data which Dr. Myerson has brought against others apply to some extent to his own work, since case-records can often be interpreted in different ways, and he himself has frequently found it necessary, after considering the clinical notes, to disagree with the diagnosis of many cases which had not come under his direct notice.

Our knowledge of mental diseases is still too vague to allow of any theorizing about the transmission of definite characters according to Mendelian laws. After considering Mendelism, Weismannism and polymorphism, or the transmission of some psychopathic unit which may be displayed in a variety of forms, Dr. Myerson inclines to the theory of blastophoria, *viz.*, that the germ-plasm may be adversely affected by environmental conditions. Unless it be by a process of exclusion or for the sake of wish-fulfilment, it is not quite clear how he has arrived at this conclusion. There is a general tendency in American psychiatry to ascribe more to a possibly alterable environment than to a probably intractable constitution. To quote the author again:

“ If we too readily assume heredity of an inevitable kind as cause, the result is a paralysis of investigation, for any fundamentally fatalistic doctrine inhibits research and study. But if we say that the environment, in some of its forms, as toxin, infection and lowerer of vitality, acts in a blastophoric way, we are stirred to research and study, and *results must follow.* ” (Reviewer's italics.) The nature of the blastophoric influences remain to be discovered in a programme of research outlined at the end of the book.

Dr. Myerson has summarized a great deal of material, and is to be congratulated on having produced an interesting and readable volume. He has not, however, offered very much in amplification of the work of the late Sir Frederick Mott or of the Munich School. If he has shaken a few cherished beliefs and spread a little doubt he

has performed a good service. The volume is well got up, but contains more typographical errors than might be expected from a firm whose motto is "*Sans tache*." W. S. DAWSON.

The Purpose of Education. By STGEORGE LANE FOX PITT. Cambridge University Press, 1925. 5th edition. Large crown 8vo. Pp. xxviii + 94. Price 4s.

The object of this little book is to show that modern education is often faulty both in aim and method, and that the elucidation of educational problems should come through the knowledge obtained by the experimental psychology of recent years. The reflections on the inadequacy of ordinary training are valuable, especially when worked out in such an interesting chapter as that on "Economics," in which competition as a stimulus to learning is condemned. When first published in 1913 and for some years after, this book fulfilled an important purpose in exposing the hollowness of the mechanistic theory of life with its materialistic outlook. But at the present time we want constructive criticism, and a definite pronouncement about the new psychology.

In the appendix we are told that psycho-analysis has been dealt with more fully in Chapter I than in previous editions; on investigation, however, we do not find it adequately dealt with; reading between the lines we infer that the author does not approve of Freud, but there is no definite statement. The writer's ideas make us think he would approve of Jung rather than Freud, but there is no reference to either Adler or Jung, although both these psychologists published their principles before 1913.

On p. 12 we read that "true freedom is a quality which springs from within and has to be gained by effort and perseverance, for freedom means a release from bonds mostly of our own forging." But the writer does not seem to realize the difficulty of seeing that the bonds are of our own forging, and the value of help from outside in loosing the entangling chains. It is not study of the conclusions of psychology, as stated on p. 27, but individual psychological investigation, that leads, in a difficult case, to the self-knowledge described as essential by the author. W. A. POTTS.

The Problem-Child in School. By MARY B. SAYLES and HOWARD W. NUDD. New York, 1926. 8vo. Pp. 288. Price \$1.00.

This book is published by the Joint Committee on Methods of Preventing Delinquency. It consists of narratives from the case-records of visiting teachers. Successes alone are not recorded; some failures are quite fairly set out, and their causes are analyzed. The visiting teacher is an official whose operations are, so far as we know, confined to the United States of America. It is recognized in that country, as in this, that the child who is "difficult" in school, who is constantly in trouble, who cannot agree with his teachers and his companions, who commits small acts of dishonesty