

Supplement to NATURE

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Our Bookshelf.

Ability and Behaviour.

Ability: a Psychological Study. By Victoria Hazlitt. Pp. ix+147+2 plates. (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1926.) 6s. net.

PART 2 records three years' work on "tests for special abilities in the work for Arts and Science degrees." Part 1, the result of the author's consideration of current theories of 'intelligence,' capacity and ability in the light of this work, is a capable analytic treatment of these theories coupled with an interesting new synthesis. General capacity is inborn: special abilities are developed. "The original endowment may be used in a number of ways. However it is used, it will lead to the development of special abilities" (p. 74). Prof. Spearman's 'engines' are not innate but acquired.

The construction of tests is easier in science than in arts. This is due to two causes. First, the practical work necessary in all sciences constitutes common ground which is readily tested. Secondly, special arts abilities are intrinsically more difficult to test because "the material of the natural sciences is less complex than that of the humanities" (p. 144). Still, three tests, successful in diagnosing arts ability, have been found, and results obtained support "the hypothesis that good general intelligence is more necessary for work in the Arts faculty than for work in the Science faculty" (p. 144).

R. J. B.

Brains of Rats and Men: a Survey of the Origin and Biological Significance of the Cerebral Cortex. By Prof. C. Judson Herrick. Pp. xiii+382. (Chicago Ill.: University of Chicago Press; London: Cambridge University Press, 1926.) 15s. net.

IN this book Prof. Herrick attempts to interpret the behaviour of rats and men in terms of cerebral anatomy. In the present state of our knowledge, any satisfactory solution of this interesting but immensely difficult problem is obviously unattainable. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating occupation to wander in the borderland between brain and mind and collect stray ideas as to possible points of contact.

The book may be of value to the student of psychology and the general reader. For those who are ignorant of such matters it provides an easily understood introduction to certain aspects of the comparative anatomy of the brain, in particular the cerebral cortex, and the results of an interesting series of experiments on the behaviour of rats, with tentative suggestions as to how and why some of the activities of the brain should express themselves as mental phenomena.

The book is, however, too elusive to be of much use to the serious student. This is due not solely to the fact that the author overuses vague phrases until they

become little more than meaningless catchwords, but even more to his neglect of the fundamental conceptions of neural physiology that are associated with the names of Hughlings Jackson, Sherrington, Head, and Magnus, among many others, which represent the essential principles for the interpretation of animal behaviour. The inhibitory influence of the cerebral cortex and the phenomena due to the release of its control, the regulation of posture and the amazing perfection of the automatic mechanisms for controlling the attitude of the body, and in particular the conception of a hierarchy of neural levels upon each of which a different kind of functional result is achieved—these are all matters that are of primary importance for the interpretation of animal behaviour in neurological terms, which are not given due consideration in this book. In particular, however, the chief criticism of Prof. Herrick's fascinating attempt to give a biological explanation of mental phenomena is his failure, when using his terminology, to appreciate the full significance of Sir Charles Sherrington's contribution to the general fund of knowledge of such matters.

Manners and Customs.

Le monde islamique. Par Max Meyerhof. (Bibliothèque générale illustrée, No. 3.) Pp. 80+59 planches. (Paris: F. Rieder et Cie, 1926.) 15 francs.

THIS little book aims at extending among the general public a knowledge of the origin, the character, and the extent of Islam—a civilisation which, as the author says, is composed of the most heterogeneous elements, and yet is not without a certain unity. To this unity has been added since the War an element of hostility towards European control and intervention which is very real, even though its effect as a consolidating force may have been exaggerated in some degree. M. Meyerhof's treatment has necessarily been very summary, and of his sixty-eight pages, nearly half is devoted to an analysis of the recent course of political events. In these, pan-Islamism and the racial movement tend to obscure undercurrents of opinion which have been potent forces in counteracting the movement towards unity. Admirable as is M. Meyerhof's sketch of Moslem religion and culture within the very restricted limit imposed by the nature of the popular series of which his book forms a part, it would have gained still further as a picture of actual conditions had he given a more systematic account of the divisions in the Mohammedan faith which set one sect over against another. Apart from this, it is a clear and lucid introduction to an understanding of one of the grave world problems of the day.