

## Our Bookshelf.

### PSYCHOLOGY.

*Crime and Insanity.* By Dr. W. C. Sullivan. Pp. vii+259. (London: E. Arnold and Co., 1924.) 12s. 6d. net.

As Medical Superintendent of Broadmoor Asylum, Dr. Sullivan is in a position to speak with authority on a subject which is now arousing considerable interest, not only in medical men and jurists, but also among the general public. There is no lack of literature dealing with disorders of conduct from the point of view of the alienist, and with criminal responsibility of the insane considered on the standards imposed by the law. The efforts of the author of "Crime and Insanity" have been directed towards presenting the abnormalities of conduct which are dependent on mental disease, as clinical features demanding a study of their nature and origin; and this book is a proof that when approached on these lines, the more special question of criminal responsibility becomes less complex and loses much of the obscurity with which legal subtleties have cloaked it.

Responsibility is rightly recognised as being a purely legal question; the law expresses the attitude of the ordinary man of common sense, living at this time and in a particular country. The McNaughten rules, which are always applied as the law of England, though they bear the dignity neither of parliamentary enactment nor judicial decision, enunciate the opinion of the bench of judges in the year 1843. It must be agreed that they do not represent the general feeling of public opinion to-day, and it is widely recognised by lawyers and medical men that they are inadequate; their interpretation by judges is variable and they are rarely applied rigidly. Dr. Sullivan points out that the test is unsatisfactory because it is based on a misconception of the facts; he advocates the adoption of a simpler test of responsibility, the admission of qualified responsibility, and the establishment of a system for providing the court with expert evidence concerning the mental state of the accused.

Most of this book is devoted to clinical material, and there are numerous descriptions of cases illustrating the criminology of the various types of mental disorder. It is an important and practical contribution to the literature of insanity.

*VIIIth International Congress of Psychology, held at Oxford from July 26 to August 2, 1923, under the Presidency of Charles S. Myers.* Proceedings and Papers, edited by the President. Pp. xxv+388. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1924.) 12s. 6d. net.

THE various papers collected in this report have a high intrinsic value, but the greatest interest of such a collection is to be obtained by comparing the different points of view rather than by studying the individual contributions. The discerning reader can thus obtain a trustworthy insight into the recent progress of psychology, a knowledge of its present position, and even perhaps a prognostication of its future development. The collection is representative of modern psychological thought, containing, as it does, papers from

most of the leading British psychologists and from many eminent foreigners. The editorial succeeds in emphasising the cordial international relationships which were so evident to all who attended the congress, but it seems unfortunate that no allowance was made for British linguistic ignorance by adding an English summary of the foreign papers.

Particularly interesting to the general reader are the various symposiums—"The Nature of General Intelligence and Ability," "The Conception of Nervous and Mental Energy," and "The Principles of Vocational Guidance"—but where there are so many valuable papers it seems invidious to particularise. All who wish to be abreast of the times in psychological thought will find this volume a necessary addition to their shelves.

*Special Talents and Defects: their Significance for Education.* By Prof. Leta S. Hollingworth. (Experimental Education Series.) Pp. xix+216. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1924.) 7s. 6d. net.

OUR eyes turn naturally towards the unusual; the one exception to the rule is often more interesting to study than the ninety-nine corroborating cases. There is certainly scientific value in such a study, for a fruitful suggestion is often obtained by comparing the normal with the abnormal to find their common factor.

Prof. Hollingworth writes of the exceptional child who shows a particular gift or deficiency in some scholastic subject not to be expected from his general mental level. The subject is introduced by a helpful discussion on the nature and causes of abilities and of their inter-relations, and then proceeds to a consideration of the neural base involved. The main part of the book is devoted to a detailed presentation of extreme variations of ability in the ordinary school subjects. A chapter each is given to reading, spelling, arithmetic, drawing, and music; cases are cited, and causes and remedies are discussed.

Every teacher of experience has met children who astonished him by some such unexpected gift or defect. This book is valuable for its clear explanations and practical advice in connexion with such phenomena.

### NATURAL HISTORY.

- (1) *Everyday Doings of Insects.* By Evelyn Cheesman. Pp. 245. (London, Calcutta and Sydney: G. G. Harrap and Co., Ltd., 1924.) 7s. 6d.
- (2) *The Great Little Insect.* By Evelyn Cheesman. Pp. 256. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1924.) 6s. net.

THESE two books, as may be gathered from their titles, are written essentially for the instruction and entertainment of lay readers. Their author, who is curator of insects at the Zoological Gardens at Regent's Park, London, is well qualified to enlighten the public as to many of the facts and theories respective to insect life. In her official position she is enabled to judge to a large extent what type of book will meet the demands which she is catering for. Both volumes are written in a clear, attractive style and with a "freshness" that comes as the result of a first-hand acquaintance with the objects concerned.