

NEW BOOKS

Heredity and the Social Problem Group. By E. J. LIDBETTER. Vol. i.
Pp. 159, with 26 illustrations. London: Edward Arnold & Co.
1933. Price 21s.

During the last twenty-five years the author has had unique opportunities for investigating such as were in receipt of public assistance with a view to discovering whether or not in their case hereditary factors were responsible for their poverty and dependence. The data gleaned in this investigation are to be presented in several volumes of which the present is the first. This contains 26 pedigrees with descriptive matter and statistical material thereon. Associated with each pedigree is a table showing the Poor Law history of those individuals who are in receipt of public assistance and estimating their total chargeability to public funds. The author states that no attempt will be made, until all the material has been issued, to draw inferences or conclusions from the facts disclosed. Nevertheless, it is quite plain that, in the opinion of the author, it is to inherited defects of mind or body that we must look for the chief explanation of that mass of poverty with which the Poor Law has hitherto been concerned.

Those who would prefer to think that inequality of opportunity and a harsh environment are in themselves sufficient reasons for the creation of the social problem group can at least assume that the author of this book is fully aware that environment has its children as well as heredity, and can study the pedigrees which are offered for themselves. And they are well worth the study, for this volume is a contribution to sociology of real importance. The book cannot be disregarded by anyone who is seriously concerned with the health and general welfare of our people.

The Nature and Treatment of Amentia. By L. PIERCE CLARK.
Pp. xvi + 306. London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox. 1933. Price
12s. 6d.

The problem of mental deficiency is, admittedly, often of infinite complexity both in regard to causation and treatment. Great advances have been made since the time of Itard and Seguin, but the majority of us have continued to accept such states as static and unchangeable except for those slight modifications which may be effected by specialised classes, and by intensive habit and occupational training. Clark, however, has no such view, and in this highly original and unique

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presentation he has attempted to show how far the psycho-analytic principles of Freud may be of service in understanding and modifying the behaviour of those suffering from mental defect. He believes that even when a definite organic injury is present that there are dynamic psychological factors at work which play an important part in the child's development. In support of his thesis he records an excellent series of case studies, embracing all types of mental deficiency, which he has analysed and interpreted along Freudian lines. The chief fallacy of this work is that it is almost purely objective, as naturally the patients were unable to co-operate satisfactorily in a subjective examination. It may be, therefore, that the theoretical interpretations and deductions are often seriously at fault, and that a real danger exists in propounding hypotheses which another observer might view from an entirely different angle, but Clark deserves great praise for the boldness of his conception, for his ingenuity, and for the clarity with which he expounds his views.

An Outline of Immunity. By W. W. C. TOPLEY. Pp. viii + 416, with 37 illustrations. London: Edward Arnold & Co. 1933. Price 18s.

The subject-matter of this book is derived in great part from the larger *Principles of Bacteriology and Immunity* by the author in collaboration with Professor G. S. Wilson. In rewriting those sections relating to immunological theory and practice Professor Topley has amplified some subjects and compressed others, so that the present volume is a new text-book, complete in itself. It presents a very full exposition of current knowledge on this rapidly advancing science. The aim of the author has been to review the evidence of important work on each topic and to sum up the inferences which may be drawn. This method is to be commended, but the resulting volume tends to become a work of reference rather than a text-book for medical students. Its value as the former is enhanced by a more complete bibliography than is usual in an outline of this kind. An early chapter is devoted to a simple exposition of statistical methods as applied to the data of immunity. The mechanisms of infection and immunity are then dealt with in considerable detail, the newer conceptions of herd-infection and herd-immunity which arise from the author's own studies being presented. The book concludes with chapters on the applications of immunity to diagnosis, prophylaxis and treatment, together with an indication of the methods employed in standardising immunological reagents. Essentially practical in their bearings these sections present to the clinician as well as to the laboratory workers a concise account of the application of

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immunological tests, and of the specific methods of prophylaxis and treatment now available. The book is to be recommended with confidence to all engaged in clinical research on infective disease, to workers in bacteriological laboratories, to post-graduate students and to all who desire for reference a concise and authoritative account of any aspect of immunology.

Organic Chemistry. By F. SHERWOOD TAYLOR. Pp. xii+587.
London: William Heinemann Ltd. 1933. Price 10s. 6d.

Dr Taylor has written an admirable text-book of organic chemistry, though not for the readers to whom it is especially addressed—students of medicine. For these the book is far too detailed, and in fact, in those sections which are of particular interest to the medical student and of definitely less importance to the science student, the information presented is not always accurate. Thus the relationship between hæmoglobin and its derivatives is incorrectly stated, and much more is known of the constitution of the related pigment chlorophyll than the author gives; the stages in the breakdown of sugar to lactic acid or alcohol are certainly not as stated; urea is hydrolysed by a specific enzyme urease, not by various enzymes known as ureases; it is not true that herbivora excrete hippuric acid in place of the uric acid of carnivora; in the purification of enzymes it is necessary to use a combination of various methods—precipitation, adsorption, etc.—which are mutually supplementary rather than alternative.

Dr Taylor is much more at home in the more “pure” portions (which, indeed, constitute the bulk of the book) of organic chemistry, where accuracy is combined with lucidity of treatment—greatly aided by explanatory diagrams—to produce a book which should prove most useful to the junior science student of the university or the senior student at school reading for scholarship examinations.

A special word of praise is due to the publishers for the production of so well-printed a book at so low a price.