

PSYCHOLOGICAL LITERATURE.

GENERAL.

Elements de psychologie humaine, cours professé à l'université de Gand. T. T. VAN BIERVLIET Gand, Lepper. 1895. 8°. Pp. 317 and 34 fig.

This is an elementary treatise on psychology intended especially for students studying for the B. A. degree, who as a rule lack physiological and anatomical knowledge. A large part of the book, almost half of it, is taken up with descriptions of the nervous system and of the organs of sense and movement, descriptions which are to be found in every physiology. The entire work is imbued with the physiological spirit, as may be gathered by observing the clear and precise language of the author, whose metaphors and similies are almost always borrowed from the natural sciences. It is evident that the author is not in the unhappy position of some of his contemporaries who having received a special literary education forget this when they begin to write. It is worthy of note that the physiological tendencies of the author do not lead him to materialism. He urges, on the contrary, that mental processes are entirely distinct from cerebral and do not correspond to anything material, that judgment and reason are not functions of the brain but faculties of an immaterial soul, and that the immateriality of the soul does not require proof, as it is practically doubted by no one.

A third characteristic of this book is the complete absence of experimental psychology. Researches on reaction-times are only noted in the appendix. This omission, which is apparently intentional, is surprising, as the author is the director of a psychological laboratory; and for this reason M. Biervliet's book cannot be considered as representative of the actual state of psychology.

The general plan of the work may now be indicated. After an introduction on the human body in which the author studies cells, tissues, and more especially the circulatory, respiratory, muscular and

nervous systems, including the latest views of Cajal and of Golgi, we have the first part covering the *physiology of conscious phenomena*. It includes sensations and movements, but scarcely anything else, being merely a repetition of what may be found in general treatises on physiology. The second part on the *psychology of conscious phenomena* contains definitions of ideas, judgment, reason and will, including a defense of the doctrine of the immateriality of the mind and of free will. The third part on the *psychophysiology of conscious phenomena* includes imagination, memory, motor expression, character, personality and measurement of reaction-time. In speaking of memory the author develops interesting though somewhat theoretical ideas on the mechanism of recognition and on localization.

In spite of some drawbacks the book is certainly the best elementary treatise on psychology in the French language.

Psychologie des Foules. G. Le. BON. Paris, Alcan. 1895. Pp. 200.

We have here a book that treats a subject with which the psychological laboratories scarcely concern themselves. The reading of such a work cannot but be salutary for the professional psychologist, if only to teach him that there is more in mental life than reaction-times. The author studies the 'crowd,' understanding by this word, which he uses in a wide sense, a number of individuals who think and feel in the same way, but who are not necessarily collected together in one place. Thus he introduces into his book a study of the curious popular movement produced in France by General Boulanger a few years ago. Two principal conclusions are drawn: 1st. That the importance of 'crowds' is growing daily and will continue to be a factor of increasing importance in the future. 2d. That the 'crowd' is of low intelligence, without reflection, reasoning or moderation, a prey to all extreme emotions, good or bad, incapable of self-guidance and without the power to construct or to originate. How in the face of these results an optimistic conclusion and a faith auguring well for the political future can be drawn we do not understand.

A. B.