Book Reviews

WITCHCRAFT IN SALEM VILLAGE IN 1692. TOGETHER WITH A REVIEW OF THE OPINIONS OF MODERN WRITERS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS IN REGARD TO OUTBREAK OF THE EVIL IN AMERICA. By Winfield S. Nevins. Fifth Edition, with New Preface of Striking Interest. The Salem Press Company, Salem, Mass. Price \$2.25.

The preface gives this newly published edition the particular historical value which it should have to the medical psychologist, for it calls attention emphatically to the following important fact. The psychical epidemic appearing in such force in Salem village in 1692 that it brought to vilest condemnation and death numbers of law-abiding citizens of sterling worth, was not an isolated fact of strange and startling character.

Such prosecution of witchcraft was common to the civilized world at that time and was based upon a belief which was very real and compelling to the victims of the persecution as well as to the accusers. It reveals the unity of the human mind in its slow development which has yet scarcely outgrown a belief in witchcraft and alliance with the powers of evil. Now, however, as the author points out, social enlightenment and tolerance prevent such an era of active persecution.

The atrocities of this year of 1692 in Salem village mark truly a psychopathologic epidemic which passed over the community. The psychic infection and contagion which once launched could not be stayed until its violence brought its own reaction are not unknown in other ways and forms even to-day. The records of proceedings are too meager to permit of complete diagnosis, but are full of psychopathological interest in their suggestiveness. The weight attributed to the hysterical depositions of the witnesses, particularly those of the child Ann Putnam and her subsequent confession concerning them, bear thoughtful investigation, but no less does the ready credulity and grave acceptance of these testimonies by the authorities of highest standing and most responsible positions in the village and Commonwealth.

The light which psychoanalysis has thrown upon the apparitions of the unconscious, whether as simply hysterical conviction or in more concrete form, and their obsessional influence upon the individual gives especial interpretative value to the details of these depositions and grants also a more sympathetic understanding of the weight they bore in the minds of the accusers and the judges. It assists also in the comprehension of the harshness and abject cruelty both of the punishments and of the efforts to obtain acknowledgment of guilt, since these were directed toward the destruction of a depth of guilty abasement which at that age was actually believed to exist.

JELLIFFE.

MAN—AN ADAPTIVE MECHANISM. By George W. Crile, F.A.C.S. Edited by Annette Austin, A.B. The Macmillan Company, New York. 1916.

This book is an amplification of material which has been published in part by the author at an earlier time. It receives here a fuller treatment from the practical standpoint of experiment and working hypothesis, while in its literary form it is stimulating, vigorous, a completed synthetic whole. Particularly in the earlier part of the work the stimulus of romance sur-