Book Reviews

HANDBUCH DER PSYCHIATRIE. Herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. G. Aschaffenburg in Cöln. Allgemeiner Teil. 4 Abth. Geschichte der Psychiatrie. Von Pr. Dr. Th. Kirchhoff. Allgemeine Therapie der Psychosen. Dr. A. Gross. F. Deuticke.

This installment of the "Handbook of Psychiatry" is disappointing. Kirchhoff's section on the history, consisting of 48 pages, is a very much abbreviated account which hardly does justice to the subject. It patterns closely after the models set in the larger handbooks of the history of medicine and misses much that is of interest to the student of the history of psychiatry, yet it is a polished account of some of the more striking landmark in the science. Kirchhoff maintains his earlier taken position that paresis was probably known in classical times, misquoting, we think, Monkmöller as a partisan of this opinion. The evidence of Prasch and Sudhoff which he also utilizes relative to the appearance of syphilis is we think of little avail. Kirchhoff, however, takes a less positive stand relative to this question than he did in a recent journal communication.

The work is particularly disappointing in that little account is paid to the psychiatry of other countries. French psychiatry hardly exists. Griesinger marks the boundary of the recent advance. Altogether a great opportunity has been lost. Monkmöller or some younger historian should have been chosen for this really very important chapter which should have traced the development of psychiatric ideas.

The general discussion of therapy of the psychoses might better have been omitted. Such a chapter in a handbook of any other group of diseases of such varying etiology would be deemed absurd. A chapter on the general therapy of lung disease for instance, general therapy of bone diseases, as though actinomycosis and influenza could be therapeutically allied or a broken bone and an osteomyelitis had any general therapy. Of what value is a discussion of heredity as a prophylactic measure in paresis. Syphilis is the factor. This general portion in our text books of psychiatry should be omitted. They are apt to be confusing as the tendency is to regard all mental disorders as one.

These general therapeutic notes are as good as most are but they cannot be very sound. Take the treatment of excitement as a symptom, as an example. No modern psychiatrist would deal with it as a unit, any more than a modern internist would consider hemoptysis a unit. No intelligent work on internal medicine gives a general treatment of hemoptysis, which may be due to a tricuspid regurgitation or to a tuberculous hemorrhage or what not. Thus the excitement of a paretic, a manic, or a precox needs entirely different methods of approach. Only one who has the superficial idea that excitement is to be handled as such independent of causative factors can fail to grasp this notion. This the author has not emphasized. Much time is wasted on problems of asylum architecture. This is not the problem of treatment of psychoses.

The discussion on psychotherapy illustrates the feature just mentioned. The author quotes approvingly Strümpell-Anton's remarks concerning

psychoanalysis in the psychoses without there appearing an iota of an idea as for what one may use psychoanalysis, a brain tumor, paresis, acute infectious delirium or what. This is all very inconsequential. Words, without the vestige of an idea. Thus the same with walks and talks and Dubois and Dejerine's methods. There is absolutely no indication as to the uses to which they should be put. The middle age writers discussed the value of mercury, arsenic, china, etc., for fever. Reading this discussion of Gross' puts the reader in mind of this very antique mode of approach. When will an editor have the courage and the sense to omit "General Therapeutics" in a system of this kind?

JELLIFFE.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ANCIENT RELIGIONS IN RELATION TO HUMAN EVOLUTION AND BRAIN DEVELOPMENT. By E. Noel Reichardt. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

In this book the author has attempted to give "the true perspective of the evolutionary movement" by a study of the great racial movements into which ancient and modern history have been divided, and to do this he tries to show that the natural development of the race and its concomitant advance of civilization has been overshadowed and interfered with by a cosmic influence, which he calls the generic wave. It started from a definite stimulation of the germ plasma and carries with it the great racial movements which are distinguished by the rise and decline of great religious movements down to the present day. The evolutionary result of this generic wave has been the development of a new brain structure, a new mind-organ, which being at first without contact with the material world was entirely subjective and so produced the intense subjectivity of the ancient or archaic religions. Only with the beginning of the second or modern phase of the generic wave did this new mind-organ become connected with the external world and develop into the organ we now possess; and which brings us into relation with the objective world of nature. The attempt to explain the rise and development of this subjective mind-organ and its gradual ascendancy of the Neo-andric ganglia composing it over the pre-existing Paleogynic organ preceding it inherited from a savage state in which the female bore the developmental power of the race can hardly make this book of serious value to those acquainted with the results of modern research into the structures of the brain.

The book loses its value at the very outset by its placing result for cause, the putting of the cart before the horse. To assume that the races affected by this generic movement degenerated from highly civilized and moral communities into races governed by lust and passion as a result of the subjective religions developed in them by the formation of the isolated mind-organ is not compatible with the facts revealed to the careful student of the development of mankind. Nor is the condition of the savage world, adequately explained by assuming it to be a degeneracy caused by the hostile contact of the ancient historical races and the weakening effect of widespread sexual transfusion.

The growth and decay of the ancient religions is discussed at length as well as the religious movements of the modern world and the bearing of this theory of evolutionary development upon the problems of morbid psychology, but the author's point of view and unscientific premises destroy the value of the discussions.