

as to my observations, I was assured by him that in his study of lightning for many years he had come across similar phenomena and that he felt sure that my observations had been correct.

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### SWARMING OF DESERT MILLIPEDS

A QUESTION should be placed with "A note on migration of Myriapoda," in *SCIENCE* for July 25, 1924, regarding the identification of the "black objects" encountered in the desert of New Mexico as centipedes of the genus *Scolopendra*. Black centipedes are not known, but large black millipeds, commonly referred to the genus *Spirostreptus*, are widely distributed in the desert regions of western Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. The period of the summer rains is the breeding season of these animals, and in damp weather they often emerge in large numbers from the burrows of the desert rodents, though seldom seen at other times. That the "black objects" were not examined closely is indicated by the statement that "we stopped just long enough to notice that these objects were centipedes."

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### SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

*The Unstable Child.* By FLORENCE MATEER. New York, D. Appleton and Co., 1924, pp. xii + 471.

DR. MATEER's book is a fairly complete manual for the administration of a psychological clinic, and there has been no book covering this important field as such. Furthermore, it contains the first review of psychometric methods that is at once broad and critical. These features themselves suffice to put it in the "indispensable" class for clinical psychologists for some time to come. The title might denote a book from the more strictly clinical viewpoint, rather less concerned with the administrative and research aspects of the topic. It is by no means devoted to case studies of conduct problems.

There are many useful suggestions on the conduct of psychometric examinations. On this matter the differing accounts of experts probably reflect the methods by which they personally get the best results, and as their personalities differ, so do the methods they sponsor. Dr. Mateer ranges herself with the advocates of year scale rather than point scale principles. A strong case is made out for giving the Binet type of scale according to topical categories, *e.g.*, all the "comprehension" tests together, instead of, for example, by years. Goddard is credited with first appreciating the significance of

"scatter," which is apparently quite correct, though the date of the reference cited, 1921, is later than several other publications on the point.

It is some years since Dr. Mateer first announced psychometric findings distinctive for congenital syphilis. A chapter is devoted to this matter, on which the author stands firmly to her guns. Generally inferior motor ability stood out clearly; the group are better in imaginal and verbalistic functions, and less good in "motor control and kinesthetic appreciation." There is fairly detailed presentation of the data, and Dr. Mateer apparently feels that the mental criteria can be given positive weight equal, if not prior, to serological methods.

The style of the book is more vivacious than is usually associated with such themes. At the same time there is no tendency to minimize the difficulties of the problems, or to arouse exaggerated expectations. The viewpoint is broad, and there are several entertaining philosophical reflections.

From the point of view of case presentation, a middle course is steered between considerable detail with few individuals, and a less full but more comparative treatment of larger numbers. Both types of presentation are illustrated, but the book would probably gain by additional presentations of the order chapter XI, devoted to the history of a single case. The medical aspect of the topic is not overstressed; the circumstances under which the material was derived were hardly conducive to error in this direction. Considerable stress is laid on the concept of "psychopathy," a term in psychiatric usage differential with feeble-mindedness, and the further distinction of the two concepts is a useful one. The second part of the book is indeed entitled "The Practice of Psychopathy" which, like the title of the whole book, is somewhat beside the mark; happily it does not denote a *vade-mecum für Irrsinnige, oder solche, die es werden wollen*.

Dr. Mateer's early training was in an environment dominated by one with all the contempt of genius for conventionalities of diction. The influence seems to survive in a few such expressions as torpidity and encroachment. Did the author's illustrious preceptor also use rule of thumb to denote meticulousness, disinterested as equivalent to uninterested, data with a singular verb, and write *aufgabe* thus, like a word of English? Dr. Mateer warns that accumulations of elaborate apparatus and "engraving-like beauty in written reports" are at times compensations for deficiencies of clinical capacity and judgment. So may these rhetorical peccadilloes be themselves but the foil of high excellence and trustworthiness in more vital things.

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