

BOOKS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Child Psychology

THE FIRST YEAR OF LIFE. By CHARLOTTE BUEHLER. Translated by PEARL GREENBERG and ROWENA RIPIN. New York: The John Day Company. 1930. \$3.50.

Reviewed by EDITH M. SPRAGUE

STUDENTS of child psychology will welcome Mrs. Buehler's book as suggesting not only methods of collecting data, but interpretations of them. The book is composed of two studies, one observational, the other a test series, both previously published in German periodicals by Mrs. Buehler and three of her associates. They differ from most American studies in the emphasis they place upon certain philosophical assumptions and the lack of statistical procedure in estimating the reliability of the observations and of the tests. The excellent generalizations are based on rather inadequate data.

Charlotte and Karl Buehler of the Psychological Institute in Vienna can be placed with the late Bird T. Baldwin of the University of Iowa and Arnold Gesell of the Yale Psycho-clinic as the four outstanding authorities on the abilities of very young children. The work of Gesell is known to all American students of child psychology rather better than it is to Mrs. Buehler, although she makes occasional reference to his researches. She does not mention Baldwin, who was a pioneer worker in the field.

In the first study Mrs. Buehler limits the field to the study of children of one year of age or less. Sixty-nine children in all were observed, half of them boys and half girls, sixty percent of them institution children. These were arranged in thirteen

groups each containing not less than four or more than seven, selected to be within one week of birth, one month of age, two months of age, etc., up to twelve months. She asserts that they represent "a very varied social milieu," but refrains from the American custom of presenting the data on which she bases that judgment. She has tables and charts to show that they did not vary from the average in physical condition, the criterion being weight.

The method of observing the children appears to be adapted from that used by John B. Watson and Mrs. Blanton some fifteen years ago, with the conditions under which the observations were made carefully standardized. The child under observation was watched for a period of twenty-four hours by observers who relieved each other at eight hour intervals. As she analyses the records, Mrs. Buehler quotes passages from them, and from these the reader can judge of the painstaking detail with which the records were made. The passages are, however, from single records; it could be desired that when Mrs. Buehler generalizes, as she invariably does, she would do more than illustrate the generalization with one concrete example.

The cue for classifying the reactions Mrs. Buehler takes from Bechterew, a Russian who is best known to us for his work on the conditioned response in children. Bechterew's classification is objective; Mrs. Buehler modifies it by adding the consideration of motive, and so introducing a subjective element which stimulates the imagination but is questionable from a scientific standpoint. The classifications most to be questioned are the "positively" and "negatively directed reactions." It is possible, however, for her to remain objec-

tive in describing the developmental progress from one age level to another, as she does in tracing the response to "acoustical" and optical stimuli from no response or a mere turning of the head toward the sound or light in the first two or three months to later positive movements toward the source of the stimulus.

In the field of controversy Mrs. Buehler would be more convincing if her knowledge of the theories she attacks were more complete. One is rather startled to find Watson's statement that fear is one of the primary emotions challenged on the ground that "he produced no fear reactions when he showed the child an animal." Mrs. Buehler's quarrel with Watson is merely a matter of terminology. What she calls "fear psychically founded" he calls conditioned fear. Few of his readers gather that he considers conditioned fear reactions primary. Later, "There are two examples of twenty-four-hour-long observations presented in Gesell's *Mental Growth of the Pre-School Child*!—But his groups have been established in an uncontrolled method and they lack relation to one another." This careless work of Gesell's is so integral a part of his research as to consume three pages of a four-hundred-fifty page book.

These superficialities might be excused on the ground that the studies so inadequately quoted are written in the English language. Perplexity increases, however, when a passage attacking Koffka's interpretation of a child's reaction to a lighted spot on a "relatively even ground" is found to quote Koffka as saying what no part of his "Growth of the Mind," even allowing for liberties of translation, could be construed to mean. There are in Koffka's pages numerous references to the work of Karl Buehler, with whom he frequently takes issue. The reader is left with the impression that Mrs. Buehler has attempted rather lamely to enter the battle of the Gestalt psychologists with their opponents.

The second part of the book consists of a series of carefully standardized baby tests. They are not as thorough as those of Gesell, but they are arranged to be more easily used by other workers. The introduction to these tests contains a very pertinent criticism of the usual type of intelligence test (after Binet), maintaining that while tasks whose goal is defined can distinguish the subnormal from the normal, tests to distinguish the supernormal should challenge abilities beyond mere facility of learning. "As if the very essence of a productive mind were not to create independently and uninfluenced by prescribed assignments and goals!" (The language is the translators'.)

In this introduction are instances of the same deplorable inaccuracy in referring to the work of others. Mrs. Buehler enumerates "the excellent Stanford Binet tests as well as clever tests devised by such men as Thorndike, *Terman*, and Yerkes—." The italics are ours. The reader will scarcely need it explained that the Stanford revision of the Binet tests is *Terman's*. Once more: "Heretofore, the youngest children to be included in any test series have been three-year-olds." These tests and presumably this introduction to them were published in 1928. In 1922 Kuhlman of the University of Minnesota published "A Handbook of Mental Tests" which contain standardized tests for age levels of three, six, twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months, in which the number of children used in standardizing the tests ranged from twenty in the youngest to ninety-eight in the eighteen months group.

Mrs. Buehler's method of estimating reliability is naive in comparison with the detailed statistical method of the American psychometrician. She uses the term to include both agreement between results of successive applications of the same test and an element which our test psychologists term validity. Reliability in our narrower sense is disposed of as follows: "In the case of twenty-five children who were tested for a second time after a period of from four to twelve months, the result of the first examination agreed with the result of the second with the exception of two cases." Whereupon five cases are given as illustrations.

Mrs. Buehler tells nothing of the methods

of standardizing the tests, and does not give the number of children used in the standardization. Many of the tests which her scales and Gesell's have in common she places at a different level, usually lower than that in which he places it, but without comment.

The book is valuable in that its observations are more numerous and more systematically distributed over the age range than in any other published research. Some of our workers would have presented figures indicating the reliability of the observers. That is, they would have estimated the correspondence between records made by different observers of the same situation, probably expressing the relation as a coefficient of correlation. The tests are more complete and usable than anything published for children so young.

The book contains a bibliography of some fifty titles, most of them in German, but no index.

Crime and Criminals

FORTY YEARS OF SCOTLAND YARD.

By FREDERICK PORTER WENSLEY. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931.

Reviewed by HAMILTON JEWETT SMITH

A BOOK about Scotland Yard by Frederick Wensley, who spent forty years in criminal investigation, and who rose from the ranks of the Metropolitan Police to be the first chief constable of the C. I. D., cannot fail to attract interested attention. It holds out to many the hope that at last the truth about "the Yard" is available. But "Forty Years of Scotland Yard" fulfils only a part of this hope.

There are two reasons. The more important is that many facts about such a confidential subject can never be told. The second lies in the personality of the author, whose sensitiveness prevents him from including all cases which might offend even the least prudish. Omitting such crimes, with the investigation of their motives, which constitute so large a proportion of criminal offense, gives an incomplete and not wholly frank picture.

Neither does Mr. Wensley concern himself with the complexities of human nature which account for the criminal characters he describes. Many of these are psychopathic individuals (but not so labelled). Taking into account the etiology of such cases would go a long way toward realizing the justice of legal decision which the author sets up as an ideal. That the usefulness of such knowledge is the province of the criminal investigator, as well as of the doctor of medicine, has been amply proved in this country by the work of Chief of Police August Vollmer, of Berkeley, California.

The reader will not, however, be disappointed in Mr. Wensley's explanation of the technique of police methods. He speaks with the highest authority and makes suggestions which are of value, even to the professional detective, on his own tricks in shadowing ("tailing"), in cross-questioning, on the use of fingerprints, on the practicality of the Sherlock Holmes kind of deduction, and on the special services and qualifications of his "Flying Squad." Enthusiasts for mystery stories have in these discussions an authoritative check of the procedure of C. I. D. sleuths of current fiction.

In "Forty Years of Scotland Yard" Mr. Wensley reaches three conclusions of general importance and social significance. Coming from a man of his experience and unquestioned renown, they should not be lightly disregarded. They are his disbelief in capital punishment, his conviction that the short-term punishments are effective in curtailing crime, and his absolute refusal to practise third-degree methods, commonly used by our own police.

On one occasion at least he reveals a sense of humor. Upon retiring from active service he received among many letters of congratulation one from a former criminal. It reads:

"I feel that I must join with all the other criminals and old logs in sincerely wishing you years of happiness and complete rest."

He did not fail to catch the ambiguity of the last two words.

"A book that should be on the shelves of every one interested in the great characters of detective fiction."—N. Y. TIMES

SLEUTHS

Edited by KENNETH MACGOWAN

A gallery of the 23 best detectives of fiction, and a collection of the best stories in which each appears. An unusual feature is the "Who's Who" for each detective, giving details of birth and education, hobbies and tastes, and most important cases. Affords endless comparison in sleuth technique. \$2.50

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Harcourt, Brace & Co., 383 Madison Avenue, N. Y.

SOME RECENT FICTION

A Violent Blast

DUKE HERRING. By MAXWELL BODENHEIM. New York: Horace Liveright. 1931. \$2.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

THIS book is remarkable as being a violent loss of temper sustained through two hundred and forty-two pages. It is a full-length portrait of a writer of expensive pornography, to whom his creator denies the least trace of redeeming humanity. One may as well quote from the jacket:

Duke Herring's religion is a constant effort to disembowel other people while he shields his own skin with every variety of posturing, insolence, condescension, and falsehood. Rejected by almost all women, he concocts a fable in which they are slaves whom he disdains to patronize.

Such a creature simply defeats satire; he could be sketched on a thumbnail, at most, and once he is sketched, there is nothing more for the author to say about him. The result of saying the same things about him over and over to the length of a novel is only to make the reader feel that perhaps the creator does not regard the creature as so merely contemptible as he would have us think.

One cannot help guessing that the reason that Mr. Bodenheimer spends so much time and energy flogging a dead horse is that he is actuated by personal animosity. It is only a guess, but there are various indications that seem to identify Herring with a living writer, and certainly no one could describe an actual person in such terms unless he was furiously angry with him.

This fury gives the book its only praiseworthy quality, an abundant vigor. The ability to remain violently angry for so long a stretch is remarkable, and if the anger were a little more controlled, something might have been made even of unpromising material, as the insulted Summoner in Chaucer makes a masterpiece of hate out of a dull anti-clerical fabliau. Unfortunately Mr. Bodenheimer has as little of the virtue of restraint in his manner as in his matter. His choice of words was always unusual rather than careful, and in this book his style is blown to pieces in the magnitude of his explosions. There are phrases like "a pinnacle of basilic glee" and "otherwise he would take on a basilisk smallness," at which one cannot help wondering whether Mr. Bodenheimer does not choose his words purely by ear; and the style as a whole is so cacophonous and pretentious as to be almost unreadable. For a fair sample:

Mr. Herring was inviolable to people who tried to match his verbal sarabands and salmagundis, and to those whose repartee was macaronic, or belatedly stumbling. On the other hand, undressed sallies into the midst of his wordy arabesques had the ability to disconcert him.

After all, Mr. Bodenheimer must have had a great deal of pleasure out of this book; he must not complain if nobody else does.

A Love Idyll

WORLD WITHOUT END. By HELEN THOMAS. New York: Harper & Bros. 1931. \$2.50.

FOUR years ago there appeared this author's book "As It Was," her own love story, beginning with her first meeting with her husband, a young English poet who was afterward killed at Gallipoli, and ending with the birth of her first child. "As It Was" is reprinted in the present book, which takes up the story of their married life, going on to his last leave, and the parting that was to be absolute.

"As It Was" is an integral part of "World without End," and the more valuable part. It is an exquisite and unique piece of work. With the utmost frankness and tranquillity it relates the progress of a happy love, its consummation upon Wandsworth Common, and an idyllic country honeymoon, during all of which the lovers defer marriage, like the lords of the earth that they are, until it shall be convenient for them. They are as straightforward as

Romeo and Juliet, yet almost as shy and childlike as Daphnis and Chloe; the course of their love goes forward as slowly, as delicately, and as irresistibly as the sweet unfolding of the northern spring in England or New England. All this is told with an honesty that defies convention as little as it obeys it, and a candor that recalls the Latin meaning of the word "shining whiteness."

The second, or new, part of the book is in every sense less happy. Life cannot be all honeymoon, even for people who are loving, courageous, and sensible; and it is likely to be especially hard for those who are poets and poor. But if it were only circumstance that caused the trouble in the latter part, we might still feel the same intimate sympathy with the writer's unhappiness that we felt for her happiness, and the book might preserve its singular value as an intimate revelation. But we are no longer admitted to complete intimacy; we are told either too much or too little. We are told enough to make it clear that "David," the poet, was sometimes extremely difficult, but we are not told fully of the difficulties. The value of "As It Was" was its perfect candor; in "World without End" we feel that the author, from the highest motives, is not being perfectly candid with herself. She shirks avowing to herself how much she blames her husband; but if she wishes to shield him, she tells too much. "World without End" is a sad record of poverty, half-concealed quarrels, and happily remembered reconciliations, disappointments, and fresh hopes. As a human document, it lacks clarity and perspective; as a work of art, it falls from the plane of the idyll, without attaining the depth of tragedy; it remains simply anticlimax.

Nevertheless, "As It Was" keeps its charm; it is only to the readers who already know that book that this volume will be a disappointment; to those who do not, it should be a discovery and a delight.

Lord of Finance

SHOE THE WILD MARE. By GENE FOWLER. New York: Horace Liveright. 1931. \$2.50.

Reviewed by THEODORE PURDY, JR.

AFTER a somewhat lugubrious and conventional beginning Mr. Fowler's book gets into its stride with a description of the rise and apogee of the millionaire financier, Adam Brook, otherwise known as "The Little Napoleon of Pine Street." While this character is not perhaps the last nor the last word in fictionalized American magnates, he is nevertheless better done than usual, and with a saving touch of humor too often omitted in such portraits. Less impressive than Mr. Dreiser's predatory monsters of finance, he is more true to life in his excessive vanity, conceit, and snobbishness. The best thing in Mr. Fowler's admirable book, in fact, is the most ridiculous episode of all—the adventures of Adam Brook as an M.F.H. This is caricature, to be sure, but performed with diabolical skill and remarkably successful comic effects. Can such things be? Alas, as any resident of Long Island who has seen the local country gentry attempting to combine business with pleasure can testify, such things are.

Less successful is Mr. Fowler's effort to provide his book with a thesis. The fact that middle-aged millionaires do occasionally marry beautiful young wives with whom they are unhappy may be true enough, but in this case both the parties to the marriage are so distinctly abnormal sexually that Adam Brook's failure to conquer his wife's affection is not to be wondered at. Instead, one can only wonder at his despair, and his blindness in failing to perceive the ample opportunities at hand for finding a Patient Griselda of the sort he really wanted to share his millions.

After a long digression into the fate of the wife and her prizefighter lover the author returns to Adam Brook at the end of his career. While this digression contains some of the best writing in the book, it materially detracts from the effect of the whole by taking the reader's attention and sympathies away from the central character. The end is logical but something of an anti-

climax after the highly emotional death scene which precedes it.

The matter of "Shoe the Wild Mare" is varied, but it is nearly always original and interesting. Mr. Fowler's writing has humor, force, and a clear descriptive power, backed up by a supreme knowledge of American life at the present time. He is also crude, sometimes to the verge of unbearable vulgarity, but in this case the subject is suitably illuminated by these spotlights of glaring and uncomfortable truth, while such methods are well in tune with today's fashions.

The War Mind

HIGHER COMMAND. By EDELF KOEPEN. New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith. 1931. \$2.50.

IT is growing difficult to appraise the war books that have poured from the presses in an apparently inexhaustible flood since "All Quiet on the Western Front" fished the murex up. They bring the same overwhelming evidence against the war; they experience a common difficulty in managing the vast forces with which they have to deal, like the difficulty a painter would find in painting an earthquake; and after one has read three or four, they run together in the memory, with not much to choose among them. So far as its narrative is concerned, "Higher Command" runs close to the type. Its hero is called up at the beginning of the war, he experiences the inevitable sufferings of mind and body, but continues to serve admirably, rising steadily in rank, until almost the end of the hostilities; then he suddenly refuses to shoulder his new responsibilities of commanding other men to kill and be killed, and his refusal is charitably diagnosed as shell-shock.

The chief distinction of "Higher Command" is that it is interspersed throughout with scrap-book clippings from official proclamations and orders, news items and letters to editors, advertisements, and all sorts of documents, each with its source given. These illustrate the mind of the time, especially the civilian mind, and the picture they make is a truly appalling one. It is made up of hysteria and sexual excitement, extravagance and profiteering, the hate, so much more poisonous in the cities than in the trenches, the deeply blasphemous sermons and religious appeals, of every sort of evil passion, and every sort of noble emotion in slavery to the baser. Such a collection of documentary proof of the effect of war on the mind, of the way one's own mind may be expected to go mad if there is another war, is obviously of the highest value as a corrective. The book ought to be widely read, and one's only regret about this part of it is that there is not more of it.

It is to be hoped that the fact that this material is included in a novel will gain it more readers than it would otherwise have; if it were not for this consideration, the scrap-book might better have stood alone. Unfortunately, readers who would be attracted to the book because it is a story are apt to be put off by the translation, which in the narrative part is deplorably wooden; the private soldiers talk either in a stilted and bookish rhetoric, or in a conscientious colloquialism that is even more stilted and bookish. Thus one of them says

"They'll dot you one on the snout if you don't draw in your nob again. . . . Not so loud, you young fool. Do you fancy that the chaps over yonder have no cars?"

A Merchant of Cathay

THE BOOKS OF THE EMPEROR WU TI. By WALTER MECKAUER. New York: Minton, Balch & Co. 1931. \$2.

Reviewed by ELEANOR VAN ALLEN

A SLIGHT novel—oriental fantasy of the purest dye—this is the story of Shu Yee, affluent merchant of Nanking, who, desiring spiritual perfection after material success, seeks the books of the scholar-emperor Wu Ti. He traces them even to the distant grave of another sage, that he may obtain the key of all knowledge. In traditional "East of the Sun, and West of the Moon" manner, follow the adventures on his journey to Poyang lake to dedicate a shrine for long life, to the woman who had sixty-

seven grandchildren. Oriental metaphors and the embroidered ways of Chinese phrasing overburden the narrative style, though they often produce good effects. Funny incongruities replace humor and enliven descriptions of characters and scenes. Bits of solid Confucian philosophy mingled with amazingly intricate fancy, suggest lightly the fascinating depths of the Chinese mind and imagination. The complicated ritual of hospitality, all the other elaborate customs depicted, peculiarly convey China.

The characters are melodramatic types. There is Ta Yu, the deformed magician, who saves them all from evil spirits, and Pan Chi Fu, the sage whose daughter the merchant marries. It is Lu Tsun's wise saying which wins the emperor's favor for his father, humble Shu Yee, till later he brings disgrace on his own house. Bitterly does the old man resent his daughter's betrayal by a low-caste, on the eve of her betrothal. Savagely she celebrates mock marriage with the corpse of her lover, burning herself alive in a forest hut.

There is a good deal in the tale of the barbaric pageantry of Puccini's legend opera of China, "Turandot." Platitudes abound, and some of the usual discussion about civilization, the old and new, the East vs. West, creeps in. On the whole, the book is remarkably oriental in spirit to have come from the pen of an Occidental, a German at that.

A Quandary . . .



L. A. G. STRONG

So much has been said in praise of L. A. G. STRONG since the publication of his two most recent books, THE GARDEN and THE ENGLISH CAPTAIN, that it is difficult to know

just what to quote for you as an introduction to him, but it is a pleasant quandary. For instance, *The Bookman* said in a recent article on Mr. Strong, "No figure among the post-war generation of poets and novelists shows greater promise of sustained literary achievement. . . . He writes with the sincerity and courage which mark the true artist." And about THE GARDEN (\$2.50) which is a delightful novel of Dublin before the war, a book with grand dialogue and even better humor, Percy Hutchison said in *The New York Times*, "A very rare book indeed." And then there is one more remark which really should not be neglected—Laurence Stallings in the *New York Sun* said of the stories and vignettes which make up THE ENGLISH CAPTAIN (\$2.50), ". . . clouds no larger than a man's hand—but somewhere behind the field there must be gathering the tempest of a great writer." But, of course, the best possible introduction is for you to read one of Mr. Strong's books and form an opinion of your own.

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