MENTAL HYGIENE IN PUBLIC HEALTH—Second Edition—Paul V. Lemkau, M.D., Professor of Public Health Administration, Division of Mental Hygiene, Johns Hopkins University, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1955. 485 pages, $8.00.

This is the second edition of this well-known book dealing with the public health aspects of psychiatry, the first edition having appeared six years ago. There is considerable new material and revision of the other material, and the book is thoroughly up-to-date. The author, who is a professor in this subject at Johns Hopkins, shows a thorough knowledge of the subject and his whole approach seems to be largely along lines laid down by the late Adolph Meyer who, for so many years, was Professor of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins and labeled by many as the father of American psychiatry. The book is divided into two parts—Part One discusses The Place of Mental Hygiene in Public Health, and Part Two, The Development of the Individual. The author starts out with the idea that every human being is unique, but there are certain rather common characteristics of what we call personality. He emphasizes that "All our human capacities are dependent upon genetic factors," and "The personality at any moment is the result of two types of influence: (1) The constitution of the individual; (2) the experience he has passed through since his genetic future was sealed at the moment of conception." Discussion follows of the relations of heredity and environment (physical, psychological, sociological) in line with the best thinking of psychiatry. In his early discussion of the prevention of mental illness the author emphasizes two important approaches—"(1) the protection of the brain from damage and the promotion of good general health; (2) efforts aimed at the healthy assimilation of life experiences into the personality structure of the individual as these experiences are occurring." He also goes on to state, "Mental hygiene concerns itself with the prevention of mental illnesses, the promotion of mental health, and, together with psychiatry, with early treatment to arrest behavior disorder in its early stages." Little is said of the role of heredity as a specific factor in causing mental disease or mental defect until one gets to Chapter 9, entitled: The Preindividual Factors: Eugenics. Here one finds an excellent discussion of the problem of eugenics and the role of heredity in the production of both desirable and undesirable mental states. The author emphasizes that normal traits are usually due to dominant qualities, whereas "hereditary abnormalities are usually recessive." He states that in many of the serious types of inherited mental conditions the individual dies before reaching the age of reproduction; therefore, there is no point in sterilizing such individuals. For the other conditions which are due to recessive genes from both parents who are themselves normal, he points out that there is no way of identifying such persons in our present state of knowledge. He suggests that we may in time come to spot such individuals and that possibly electroencephalography is giving us a clue as to persons who may be carrying the recessive genes of epilepsy. He is pessimistic about the present application of eugenic knowledge in the United States, and concludes that we must look forward to a progressive decrease in the average intelligence of the race until such time as we really attack this problem from the eugenic standpoint. On the positive side it is pointed out that dispersion of the population will result in fewer marriages where the same recessive gene will occur in both parents—hence a lessened incidence of the defects due to such recessive genes. He also emphasizes the well-recognized idea that if we have large families from desirable stock and smaller families of undesirable stock, the net result will be beneficial from the hereditary standpoint. He also mentions something probably not known to most physicians, that in West Germany, at the present time, the public health agencies can check through marriage licenses and family histories. "When such an individual wishes to marry, the health officials have the right to call him in, to persuade him to tell his proposed marital partner of the situation, and to counsel with both regarding the possibility of passing on defective germ plasm. Originally, the health official had the legal power to stop the marriage, though this is no longer constitutional in West Germany. No such program is known to exist elsewhere." There is a brief discussion of birth control as a means of both increasing the families of desirable parents and decreasing or preventing any children at all in couples where there is strong likelihood of inheritance of undesirable mental qualities. It is pointed out that some nations have even legalized abortion as a eugenic measure. The first part of the volume deals largely with specific problems of organization and function of mental hygiene in the field of public health, together with the techniques to be employed. There are three chapters on the attack of the problem at national, state and local levels.

The rest of the book is taken up with the development of the personality, having chapters for the various stages of development of the personality, beginning with the prenatal period and ending up with the period of old age. These are excellent general summaries of the subject, but necessarily have to discuss in a single chapter subjects which often fill one or several volumes. On the whole, the author has done well in the material selected and presented. There is an interesting appendix which discusses the classification of psychopathological states for the public health officer, and there is a 24-page listing and evaluation of visual aids. The book is a well-rounded, up-to-date discussion of mental hygiene in public health, and can be recommended to anyone who wishes to read a volume on this subject.

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CLASSICS OF BIOLOGY—August Pi Suner. Philosophical Library, New York, 1955. 337 pages, $7.50.

Dr. Stern has done the English speaking public a real service in giving us this translation of Dr. August Pi Suñer's admirable compilation of *Classics of Biology*. The scheme followed with each of the many chapters is to present first an "orientation" essay on the subject to be considered such as Biocatalysts, Heredity, Individual and Species, etc., followed by abstracts from the works of great students concerned with that topic. Thus under Individual and Species there are quotations from the writings of Linnaeus, Cuvier, Darwin, Huxley, De Vries and Woodruff. There are 16 such chapters containing a storehouse of information on the fundamental aspects of biology. This is indeed a masterly compilation which must have involved endless reading, thought, and judgment on the part of the compiler.

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THE OFFICE ASSISTANT—In Medical or Dental Practice—Portia M. Frederick, Instructor, Medical Office Assisting, Long Beach City College; and Carol Towner, Executive Assistant, Department of Public Relations, American Medical Association, W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, 1956. 351 pages, $4.75.

This small book will be of inestimable value to anyone desirous of capably assisting in a physician's office. It has considerable value to any physician who would like a reliable guide for his office assistant. Written clearly and concisely, emphasis is properly placed on the public relations aspects of the assistant's position. Considerable detail is also offered in discussion of ethics, technique of reception, making appointments, keeping records, billing and assisting in examinations, the laboratory and with medications. Even the complex subject of insurance is well covered, although one could wish for more detail here.

This book should be in every office and might well be required reading for all office assistants.