

BOOK REVIEWS

THE ALMOSTS. A study of the feeble-minded. By Helen MacMurchy. The Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York.

We owe Dr. MacMurchy a debt of gratitude for interpreting Smike, Wamba, Mr. Toots, Barnaby Rudge, young Sparkler, and other celebrities depicted by Scott, Dickens, Victor Hugo and Charles Reade in the light of modern psychological study, for we shall return to our old loves with renewed interest, and read and enjoy from a new point of view.

Dr. MacMurchy shows admirable judgment and discrimination in her selection of extracts from the various novelists and poets, illustrating the characteristics of feeble-minded folk, and expresses wise and humane views with regard to the training and protection of mental defectives.

We heartily commend "The Almosts" to our readers.

A. G. M.

THE MENTAL HYGIENE OF CHILDHOOD. By William A. White, M.D. Little, Brown and Company, Boston.

In his preface the author makes known the intention of the book, namely, to throw light on child problems by means of the methods of psycho-analysis, with special reference to sexuality.

The first chapter deals with the relative powers of heredity and environment in fashioning the product, Man, and, in the author's opinion, environment is much the more potent force, since certain mental qualities, not essential to the life of the individual, such as honesty or dishonesty, irascibility, etc., are not necessarily transmitted by heredity.

But here the question arises, are not certain tendencies of mind transmitted by heredity? How, otherwise, can we explain the character differences among the children of a large family, all of whom are presumably in practically the same environment? Or has the scientist something yet to learn about children from wise and observant mothers?

Again, whether elements or tendencies of unconscious thought are inborn is an unsettled question. At the same time, the enormous importance of environment and of early training, and the need of not looking at the child from the adult point of view, are duly emphasized.

Then follows an account of the two primitive instincts, the ego- or self-preservation instinct, and the race-preservation, combined with