

being twisted over the eastern States into prevailing south or south-west winds in July, and north-west winds in January.

There is no better chapter in the book than that dealing with climate and health, together with the summer and winter health resorts of the United States ; and we do not think that any member of the medical faculty could find fault with the philosophy displayed. It is clearly recognised that climate to a considerable extent acts indirectly on the human organism, and that the same phases of weather and climate may produce effects variously, for good or evil, according as hygienic, economic, and social factors are sound or faulty, and according to the level of health of the individual. In England, for example, we know that a spell of frost and snow sends up the crude death-rate, but we also know that the same weather is a fine tonic to those who can react to it and love the open air.

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### The Psychology of Selecting Men.

*The Psychology of Selecting Men.* By Prof. Donald A. Laird. Pp. xii+274. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc.; London: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., Ltd., 1925.) 15s. net.

ENGINEERS and chemists have long been an essential part of the staff of every large factory. No new machine is bought before it has been carefully examined and good proof evinced of its worth. Samples of raw materials are analysed by the chemists to observe their purity or strength. It is but recently, however, that the importance has been realised, in full, of the scientific selection of staff. The success of many a factory depends as much, or more, on the skill of the men who use the machines as on the machines themselves. It is no uncommon thing to find two operatives with equal experience, working side by side on similar machines, one of whom will produce half again as great an output as his companion.

How can selection be successfully made among applicants for a position? What method can be used to gain a true indication of their innate capacity for the work? Dr. Laird in the work before us has answered this question with as much detail as is at present available. His book is admirably planned. He starts by outlining the need for employment psychology, and then proceeds to show how its basis rests on the degree and extent of individual differences, and how it is generally safe to postulate that in an unselected group of individuals, these differences approximate to normal distribution.

The validity of the older methods of selection—the letter of application, the interview, the so-called “scientific character reader”—is discussed, and Dr.

Laird gives definite proof that their selective value in many cases, especially with young workers, is little better than that obtained by chance. The unwary reader is himself trapped into making judgments from handwriting and photographs and thus shown his limitations. Many factors are concerned in the inadequacy of these methods. Often they measure irrelevant factors—you can tell but little of a prospective engineer's ability from his conversation, or of a carpenter from the letter he writes. But even in cases where the methods themselves have potential prognostic capacity, this is often lost through slipshod application, and lack of a standard by which to judge the results.

All this, however, is by way of introduction; though useful as a warning, it is merely negative criticism. The second half of the book is more constructive. There Dr. Laird is concerned with the use and evaluation of psychological tests of selection. Almost any sort of task can be used as a test if only it will give an accurate indication of the applicant's ability, or predict with great success his future performance. There is, as Dr. Laird says, no mystery about mental tests. “They are simply an application of the scientific method.” The tasks, whether they are actual samples of the work, or simple trials of the fundamental capacities underlying ability at the work, must prove their worth before they are used. “They must show their consistency from day to day, their consistency from user to user, and their internal consistency of measuring what they aim to measure.”

It must be remembered, however, that “tests are part of employment psychology, but by no means are they the sole contribution of psychology to employment.” The interview and letter of application can be improved by making them more objective and supplying standards. It is especially important to analyse the personal data of successful and unsuccessful workers by group comparisons or other methods, to discover if there are any distinct differences in such matters between the two groups.

Dr. Laird's book is, as he says in his preface, “a product of necessity.” The demand among employers for scientific assistance in the selection of their workers is becoming pronounced, perhaps even more in Great Britain than in America. The subject is still in its infancy and an enormous amount of research is necessary, but already psychological tests have proved themselves more than idle theory, and are in use in many offices, shops, and factories. They have been approved of alike by the employers who have benefited by the increased output, and by the employees who appreciate the justice of this method of selection. With such economic and social value their future is assured.

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