of voluntary action and is of importance to all voluntary organizations. The fourth part of the book is devoted to the publication of memoranda from fifteen organizations representing the wide variety of interests in the field of voluntary action. There is also a directory of some of the leading voluntary societies and an extensive, though not complete, bibliography on voluntary action. A valuable section of the book is that in which "memoranda by individuals on special topics" are included. The contributors are Lord Beveridge, Mr. A. F. Wells, Mrs. Joan Clarke, Mr. Roger Wilson and Mr. John A. Lincoln.

It is not possible here to deal in detail with the numerous and varied facts and suggestions which every section of the book contains. With its companion volume, *Voluntary Action*, much information, not previously available, is presented in such a form as to make for easy reference. The many statistical tables are comprehensive and varied, and in addition to the conclusions which are suggested every reader will find in them a basis for his or her own comments and hypotheses.

With public attention focussed on the future of the voluntary societies, the present situation calls for strict examination of their own affairs by all voluntary organizations. *Voluntary Action* and *The Evidence for Voluntary Action*, together provide much valuable material for this purpose.

J.S.

Understandable Psychiatry. By Prof. Leland Hinsie, M.D. The Macmillan Company, New York. 22s. 6d.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature about this remarkable book is its choice of title, for it would be hard to find a parallel for it, in its combination of flamboyant style and confusing content.

No doubt Professor Hinsie understands his own particular brand of psychopathological theory, but it is difficult for the reader to do so. Lip service is frequently paid to Freudian theory, and psycho-analytical terms are used in many chapters, but the meaning given to them in this book is frequently entirely different from that devised by Freud and accepted by most psychiatric workers. But, in addition, the author uses numerous other strange technical terms, many of which are entirely unnecessary and all of which are very ugly. As examples may be quoted "Psychalgia" (mental pain as opposed to physical pain or somatalgia); "Altrigenderism and Suigenderism" (apparently representing hetero- and homo-sexuality with some special obscure significance of their own) and "Psychoscopy" (which is defined as mental microscopy). The book is liberally spattered with sentences in italics. Some of these italicized passages contain points of importance and worthy of stressing, but the use of italics is so frequent, and much of the content is so banal, that they quickly cease to be of any value and become only an irritating interruption of one's reading.

According to the author's preface this book was written equally for the physician and the patient. Its intentions are clearly good and there is something of value, especially in its later chapters, if the reader will have the patience to extract these points from the mass of verbiage. It is, therefore, regrettable that the result as a whole is so confusing. In its present form it is likely to irritate the physician who reads it, confuse or disturb the patient according to his degree of insight and do a good deal to harm psychiatry in the eyes of its critics.

T.A.R.

The Biology of Mental Defect. By Lionel S. Penrose, M.D. Sidgwick & Jackson. 21s.

Many people hold very definite views which they do not hesitate to propound on this subject. For example a leading dignity of the church recently advocated wholesale sterilization of mental defectives in an article published in a daily newspaper. Those who are interested in the social problem of mental inferiority would do well to study this new book on the subject by Professor Penrose. By so doing they will gain an insight into the extreme complexity of the problem and realize that it is one which cannot be solved by any single piece of dictatorial legislation. On the contrary, mental defect is an inevitable part of our social structure as it stands to-day. This is not to say that the dimensions of the problem may not be much reduced and the lot of particular individuals (whether patients or their relatives) much eased by proper social provision. Penrose quotes Arkansas, Arizona and Nevada as states in which no provision is made for mental defectives and shows that in those states there is an equivalent rise in the number of persons admitted to prison and he notes that in general it costs more to keep a citizen in prison than it does in an institution for mental defectives.

Throughout his book Penrose brings to bear an accumulation of scientific erudition in contrast to the moralising tone which permeates the older text-books of mental deficiency. He shows that modern psychiatry has little use for the legal concept of moral defect and points out that in general mental defectives are not less but more receptive in point of character training than ordinary individuals. He suggests that the origin of faulty habits which high-grade defectives may acquire, lies not so much in any innate propensity for wickedness as in a faulty social environment, and points out that the purpose of institutional care of such cases is re-equipment for a useful life in the community. In general he does not favour the mixing of high-grade delinquents and "psychopathic personalities" with well-behaved patients of a lower level. He shows that the result may be bad for both groups inasmuch as the bad behaviour of the delinquents may serve as a model for their less gifted fellows whilst the more intelligent patient who is committed to an institution from court or prison is contemptuous of the imbeciles