

**The Art of General Practice.** DAVID CAMERON MORRELL, M.B., B.S., M.R.C.P., M.R.C.S., D.Obst.R.C.O.G., D.P.H. Edinburgh and London. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. 1965. Pp. viii+124. Price 12s. 6d.

**A View of General Practice.** PETER J. BELL, M.B., B.S., D.Obst.R.C.O.G. London. Lloyd-Luke (Medical Books) Ltd. 1965. Pp. vii+232. Price 20s.

Two books on the same subject seldom appear simultaneously, but these volumes have much in common. They are the result of the reaction between present-day general practice and two young authors of shrewdness and perception.

Dr Morrell's approach is philosophical. He examines a number of aspects of practice, and, in a series of thoughtful essays shows how experience is gained in a discipline the nature of which is quite unknown to the hospital consultant, and to many medical teachers also. He describes the three stages of adjustment to the world outside the hospital walls; over-confidence of youth followed by depression that it is all so different, and then the growing awareness of what general practice really is. History-taking, diagnosis, prognosis and treatment are discussed with anecdotal illustrations of the kind of successes and failures that go to make up a practice day. In an otherwise sound chapter on examination of the patient he runs the risk of over-formalizing the extent to which clinical examination should be undertaken under different circumstances. In a few more years he will find himself discarding this framework and his indications will be those of the individual, the time, the place and his own suspicions. Those who assist the doctor in an infinity of ways, from the district midwife to the parish priest, are discussed in turn. Perhaps he underestimates the benefits to a practice which follow not mere attachment of local authority nurses, health visitors and social workers but their incorporation into the running of a practice as completely and comprehensively as possible. This tendency to accept things as they are is perhaps surprising when there is such good prospect of change for the better ahead.

References indicating wide reading follow each chapter, and the book ends with a useful bibliography containing one misplacement only. The work of Watts and Watts should be acknowledged in its proper place, among fellow general practitioners and not relegated to the books written for general practice by specialists.

Dr Peter Bell takes an extremely practical view of general practice and he does it very well indeed. He has written twelve chapters with an index, and each is divided into sections and sub-sections in a methodical fashion. This is usually done at the cost of readability but Dr Bell has quite avoided this sacrifice. Two impressions remain, comprehensiveness and clarity. Some of the ground described above is covered in this book also, but in a complementary sense. Its range extends further into administrative and logistic aspects of practice as well as more precise handling of some aspects of diagnosis and treatment. Non-clinical problems of practice organization, finance, staffing and documentation are discussed so fully that few of us will fail to find ways in which our own organization is lacking. The section on maternity care is capable of some expansion but to offset this

there is an admirable exposition of the doctor's relationship with the law, and the forensic activities which at some time or another may fall to the lot of the doctor in practice. In considering the future of practice and the correction of public misconceptions as to status of doctor in and outside hospital, the author advocates practitioner teaching through university departments of practice and outlines a scheme which accords well with the policy of our College.

This review must include one serious criticism of both publishers who have encased good typography and layout in utterly inadequate bindings. The glossy paperback covers, one with advertising matter on the back outer face, are flimsy and uncomfortable in the hand. One review copy arrived with the cover detached from the spine along its whole length requiring immediate amateur repair with adhesives. Such presentation as this does justice neither to the work of the authors nor the reputation of the publishers.

**Health Services Administration.** Edited by R. J. PETERS, M.D., F.R.C.P., D.P.H., and J. KINNAIRD, M.A., B.L., C.A., F.H.A. Edinburgh and London. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. 1965. Pages xv + 500. Price 42s.

In Britain today the population is increasing faster than the availability of family doctors, so N.H.S. lists lengthen at a time when medicine can do so much more in maintenance and the public expects more. Handling the ageing and their morbidity demands more time and effort from overstrained resources while the pressure on hospital facilities in recent years for medical and surgical care of the aged has more than doubled. And there is a continuing cry for more staff, of all grades and skills, to work in the field of medical care.

Against this background this book is timely. Produced as a source book containing general information and a wide range of references on subjects studied by postgraduates taking the medical services administration course at Edinburgh University, Dr Peters and his collaborators scrutinize over a wide range the administrative function in the provision of health services. This is considered from important social, psychological, economic and technical aspects among others, an approach especially useful because the amount of knowledge and skill available, outside medicine, for modern comprehensive medical care is already considerable and is constantly increasing.

By contrast there is little reference to general practice. On page 269 it is stated that before the introduction of the National Health Service there was in domiciliary medical care a well established general practice service covering the country: the point is well made that each practitioner was his own master, there was no organization in this service. And the authors' comment of 1965, it is not greatly different today. With this opinion your reviewer must agree.

The only effective organization for general practice that can be discerned exists for paying the doctor and for investigating complaints. The com-