

return home after 48 hours to kindly families and quiet nights seems to offer the best when obstetrically possible.

The second book is written by an American obstetrician for lay readers. He too is a follower of Dick Read. This is meant as a supporting book to carrying out medical advice including the puerperium and is for both parents. He shares Dr Fleury's belief that full information is desirable. Instructions after anatomy and physiology include dietaries, exercises, genetics, of course emotional adjustment, treatment of minor ailments and a glossary. The line drawings are enchanting, photographs of clay models of foetus and uterus are obscure, but perhaps aim at allaying alarm. The index is a useful one. There seems to have been little attempt to translate to suit this country's readers. It all seems so smooth and unreal in contrast with the recorded experiences of Dr Fleury's mums, but this reader feels that were the material and aims of the authors reversed the personal and educational material would be comparable in both. In any case there is evidence in each book of the high standard of professional and obstetric care in essential management and technique on either side of the Atlantic. Family doctors will find useful material for thought in both volumes.

The nature of childhood autism. GERALD O'GORMAN, M.R.C.P., D.P.M. London. Butterworths. 1967. Pp. vii + 134. Price 30s.

The care and treatment of the mentally subnormal. CHARLES H. HALLAS, S.R.N., R.N.M.S., R.N.T. Bristol. John Wright and Sons. 1967. Pp. 254. Price 35s.

Mental abnormality in children, whether psychosis or defect, is a subject so painful to the general public, and to many doctors, that we tend to avert our eyes and our minds from it. These two books, the first directed mainly to doctors, the second to nurses, show how much patients, doctors and nurses stand to gain from a sympathetic attempt to understand the nature, possibilities and limitations of the sufferers.

Autism in children is a fairly recent concept. As yet we are uncertain of its pathology; whether it is an illness or a symptom. It involves a withdrawal from reality, a mechanism that Dr O'Gorman emphasizes occurs at times in normal human beings. But when the withdrawal is so complete that the child fails to make relationships with others, he may appear to be mentally subnormal or schizophrenic. In fact, the child may be of normal intelligence though retarded by his withdrawal. Autism may be a mechanism used by a schizophrenic child, but not all schizophrenics are autistic. The subject is a difficult one, but Dr O'Gorman treats it comprehensively and makes it lively and interesting by means of a lucid style and copious case histories. The book should be most valuable to a family doctor who has in his care an autistic child, and worth reading by any who are interested in the still obscure origins of psychosis.

Mr Hallas's book is the third edition of one originally appearing in 1958 as *The nursing of mental defectives*. He has revised and added to it in the light of increasing knowledge, but there is no mention in it of autism. The arrangement of the book may make it hard going for the student nurse. After a good short introduction, Mr Hallas gives her a tough chapter on the legal aspects of mental subnormality, and then a mind-twisting chapter on clinical varieties. She would do better perhaps to start with chapter five, page 48, on the admission of a patient, where the subject becomes alive, and Mr Hallas shows his true kindness and humanity.

Dr O'Gorman's book deals with a subject just as difficult, but he starts us off with a bang with a case history that rivets our attention and gives us courage for

the mental grind to follow. Mr Hallas gives no actual clinical material at all, though his experience is obviously wide. The last 40 pages, with chapters on psychological development, patterns of behaviour, intelligence, personality, the unconscious, and emotions, are of necessity scrappy and unsatisfactory; too much is attempted in too short a space. The main, and best, parts of his book are devoted to nursing treatment and general management.

Dr O'Gorman and Mr Hallas both show not only how wrong and how unnecessary it is to adopt a defeatist attitude, but also how we can cope realistically when we have to face failure.

Practical management of the elderly. W. FERGUSON ANDERSON, *O.B.E.*, M.D., F.R.C.P. Oxford and Edinburgh. Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1967. Pp. vii + 304. Price 50s.

There are some very good features in this book which ranges over the whole of medicine from the point of view of the geriatrician. The rehabilitation of the hemiplegic is particularly well described and is illustrated by excellent photographs. A large number of new or modern drugs are discussed or recommended in treatment and in each case accurate details of quantities and intervals are given. It is pleasant to read of the Retired Employee's Association's interest in welfare in Glasgow. On his retirement each employee receives prepaid addressed post cards so that, if he becomes ill or finds himself in difficulties, he can request help immediately; whereupon he is visited by a friend or the personnel officer and need never feel lonely or isolated—a fine boost to morale. On the other hand it is surprising that, in a book of this size, care of the dying is dismissed in less than 50 lines. Occasionally, as on page 17, a sentence is obscure—"An indication is given of the significance of the related produce moment correlation co-efficients (of zero order) in series of age".

The general practitioner should make a note of this book to be referred to in rare or difficult clinical problems.

Chronic diseases and public health. Edited by ABRAHAM M. LILIENFELD and ALICE J. GIFFORD in collaboration with the Conference of Chronic Disease Training Program Directors of Schools of Public Health. Baltimore and London. The Johns Hopkins Press. Oxford University Press. 1966. Pp. xvii + 846. Price 88s.

This is a heavy book—it weighs 3½ lb—and it contains no light reading for the diversion of an idle moment. Instead there is a formidable, indeed almost frightening, mass of factual information on current American practice in the field of chronic disease. An informative introduction on the demographic background to chronic diseases is followed by discussions of methods of measurement including the transatlantic concept of morbidity surveys and the evaluation of their results. Numerous contributors take part in this. The second part of the book is devoted to certain selected diseases, including cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Here again there is a strong western bias, the authors of chapters on diabetes detection in general practice and surveys carried out from 1958–1963 apparently being quite unaware of the work done in Birmingham or Bedford. In the final section there is a description of the administrative aspects of chronic disease programmes with accounts of the work of the National Institutes of Health and other voluntary health agencies.