

Book Reviews

Wreath on the crown, The story of Sarah Jacob the Welsh fasting girl. JOHN CULE. Llandysul. Gomerian Press. 1967. Pp. 143. Price 18s.

One hundred years ago the whole country was discussing the strange story of the Welsh fasting girl who, according to her parents, had not eaten for two years but who, when put to the test, died within a fortnight. The story which is now retold by Dr John Cule makes fascinating reading and is recommended.

You are extraordinary. ROGER J. WILLIAMS. New York, N.Y. Random House, 1967. Pp. xv+252. Price \$5.95.

The author of this volume is an eminent biochemist, the discoverer of the vitamin pantothenic acid, and the writer of many works on his own speciality. This book, however, is directed at a popular readership, and has as its theme the fact that all men are individuals and each one is unique biochemically, physically, and psychologically.

What little merit there might be in restating this obvious fact is destroyed in this instance by over-emphasis, special pleading, and tedious reiteration. In the fields of medicine, psychology, philosophy and religion, the most astonishing claims and inferences are made from this simple premise and the *non sequitur* reigns supreme. On the question of alcoholism, for instance, Freud, Pavlov, and the Behaviourists are alike dismissed; the disease is not psychiatric, it is nutritional, and on the flimsiest evidence the following bald claim is made: "Yes, abundantly good nutrition can abolish craving for alcohol by human as well as animal subjects!" Other equally breathless excursions are made into the realms of philosophy and religion.

There may be a small public, overawed by statisticians and sociologists and the concepts of admass and lumpen-proletariat, who would benefit from a lecture on individuality: it is difficult to imagine any general practitioner who has not already got that message, and who would not be irritated by the wilder flights of fancy in this volume.

Mental subnormality. W. ALAN HEATON-WARD, M.B., CH.B., D.P.M. Third edition. Bristol. John Wright & Sons Ltd. 1967. Pp. 100. Price 8s. 6d.

This is a very comprehensive paperback. Since the previous edition much fresh knowledge of the causes of mental subnormality, mainly chromosomal and genetic, has accumulated. This is reflected in the section on causation, which runs to 29 pages. The fact that the section on the care of the mentally subnormal comprises eight pages reflects our comparative helplessness in face of this human tragedy. However, Dr Heaton-Ward writes from experience, with common sense, wisdom and compassion, and emphasizes what can be done when these qualities are brought to bear on apparently hopeless problems. There is a good section explaining the common intelligence tests, and a full review of the legal aspects of the care of the mentally subnormal both in England and Scotland with