

The psychology of anxiety. EUGENE E. LEVITT, M.A., Ph.D. London. Staples Press Ltd. 1968. Pp. 259. Price 36s. 0d.

This is an attempt by a psychologist to describe and study the problem of anxiety, probably the commonest of human emotions: and certainly a complex and difficult subject for analysis. Anxiety is a broad abstraction which, while everyone is aware of its existence, is difficult to define. Freudian and non Freudian theories are expounded, as well as defences against it. This latter section is very well conceived, as is the chapter on the physiology of anxiety with a brief description of 'anti-anxiety' areas of the brain. The anxieties of everyday life are of considerable interest. In this modern world the surgeon and the dentist provoke a great deal of anxiety in large sections of the community. This is a thought-provoking book written with considerable objectivity. It is a useful monograph for the serious student of psychology or psychiatry. There was one remarkable omission. The place of psychosis as depicted in schizophrenia was discussed but the far more common manic depressive illness is not mentioned. Depression has no place in the index, and yet as a potent cause of anxiety it has few rivals.

Prevention of suicide. Geneva. World Health Organization. 1968. Pp. 84. Price 8s. 0d.

This pamphlet was produced by the secretariat of the World Health Organization with the advice of experts from various countries. It is disconnected and reads like a prospectus. So enormous a topic, which strikes at the roots of human behaviour, could not be even superficially presented in a small compass. The types of person who commit suicide are listed and the importance of medical treatment of the physical act discussed. The education of profession and public is mentioned, with special attention to suicide counselling services. For those with some knowledge there is nothing new, for the rest the recurrent use of the conditional tense must irk and fail to carry conviction. It has been said that a camel is a horse designed by a committee, *mutatis mutandis*, the same remark could apply to this production.

A report on the efficiency of obstetric systems and the scope of the general practitioner obstetrician in various countries. ANTHONY BLOOD, B.M., B.Ch., D.Obst.R.C.O.G., M.R.C.G.P. Privately printed. Pp. 84.

The author used a Nuffield Travelling Fellowship to visit Czechoslovakia, Holland, Western Canada and South and Western Australia during the last six months of 1967. This valuable objective report is the result. It could be described as an enquiry into the doctrine that obstetric efficiency can be achieved only by delivering a large percentage of mothers under consultant care.

First, thoughtful and detailed consideration is given to methods of assessing obstetric efficiency and of allowing for the varying degrees of difficulty

presented by the characteristics of different populations. Factors such as the proportion of babies of low birth weight have to be taken into consideration when assessing or comparing results.

Subsequent chapters describe each country visited under the headings of general medical organization, obstetric organization, type of obstetrician, quality control, art of obstetrics and perinatal mortality; with the additional heading of home delivery in the case of Holland. The good and bad points of each system are recorded and the results assessed statistically as far as is possible, making allowance for the degree of difficulty presented by the particular population.

The final chapter is a discussion of the author's findings in these countries in relation to each other and to the United Kingdom. Among his conclusions are: the art of obstetrics differs less than obstetric systems; differences in perinatal mortality rates may be due more to differences in maternal population than efficiency; if cases were delivered in hospital with the same personal care as at home, the results would be even better; the general practitioner produces his best results when he retains clinical control and ultimate responsibility; and personal responsibility is more effective than team-work.

This is an important report which should be read by every obstetrician, specialist or general practitioner, and especially by everyone concerned with planning obstetric services for the future.

New Editions

Fundamentals of current medical treatment. Revised edition with supplement. C. W. H. HAVARD, M.A., D.M., M.R.C.P. London. Staples Press. 1968. Pp. 825. Supplement 64. Price £3 10s.

Dr Havard in his preface points out that in view of the remarkable advances in therapeutics over recent years, there is need for a new look at medical treatment and that "a generation of physicians nurtured on this therapeutic revolution has some contribution to make". This modern approach is reflected in the chapter headings which include 'Drug induced disease', 'Diuretics', 'Antimicrobial therapy' and a section on 'Corticosteroid therapy', which is considerably longer (51 pp.) than those on diseases of the heart and circulation (38 pp.) or diseases of the alimentary tract (39 pp.). There is an excellent section on psychiatric diseases well suited to the needs of the general practitioner. The complex subject of fluid and electrolyte balance is dealt with in detail with stress on the underlying principles of prevention of diseases in this field. This is not easy going for the non-specialist but the author does provide a number of tables which are a help towards clarification. Inborn errors of metabolism are rather surprisingly dismissed in less than a page which includes the statement that treatment of phenylketonuria "is usually disap-