

The understanding physician: writings of CHARLES D. ARING, M.D. Revised edition, (1971). Pp. viii, 214. Detroit: Wayne University Press. Price: \$8.95.

This volume of the writings of Dr Charles D. Aring was originally brought together to celebrate the fiftieth year of his association with the University of Cincinnati where he was professor of neurology. It contains 32 short articles originally published as editorials or essays in medical journals. They range in scope from such subjects as the medical student and his education to old age, from the doctor's reading to advice on how to prepare papers for the press.

The United States has produced several outstanding medical scholars—Oliver Wendell Holmes and Silas Weir Mitchell were two such and the great Osler matured on the then untrod campus of Johns Hopkins Medical School. Dr Aring would not wish to be measured against these standards; indeed, he could not be. These essays vary so much from the trivial to the profound. Suffice it to say that those which are profound are well worth reading.

Care for the elderly. A collection of reports on a series of 12 conferences held at the Hospital Centre between June and December 1970. London: King's Fund Hospital Centre. 1971. Pp 3 + 74. Price: 50p.

This reasonably priced report in booklet form summarizes a series of 12 conferences held at the Hospital Centre, on services for the elderly in hospital and the community. Staff from many branches of the health and social services as well as voluntary workers participated and the report provides a valuable pooling of ideas and experiences.

Subjects covered in the conferences include voluntary services, preparation for retirement, screening, psychogeriatric services, incontinence, day care and rehabilitation. A special conference on the hospital geriatric unit makes no mention (at least in the summary) of the great potential of the general practitioner hospitals in this respect and the need for decentralisation of geriatric hospital care.

An interesting recommendation was that a 30-bed geriatric unit required a total of 14 wc's. "It was shown as a result of investigation that the average elderly patient has only one and a half to two minutes from comprehension of a full bladder to involuntary relaxation of the sphincter and that this meant that patients must be within 3-40 feet of the wc at all times."

General practitioners hardly need reminding of the extent of the problems inherent in providing

satisfactory services for the elderly. At present some 12 per cent of the population of the United Kingdom are above the arbitrary—and admittedly somewhat meaningless—barrier of 65 years, and of these almost 95 per cent are living independently in private households in the community relying for their basic medical care on the general practitioner.

General practitioners in the future are unlikely to be able to limit themselves to basic medical care and "disposal" of their elderly patients. More and more they will be liable to become involved at a commercial level and expected to give intelligent advice to such diverse bodies as planners of special housing schemes; old age pensioners and pre-retirement clubs and voluntary help organizers in a multitude of different fields. There are, after all, only about 200 geriatricians in Britain and over 20,000 general practitioners.

The information given in this report covers a wide spectrum and although largely concerned with matters of organisation and planning the human side is not ignored and there is obvious concern and sympathy for the individuals and admission of the limitations of theoretical planning.—"In the long run personalities and how people worked together were far more important than the number of toilets or the amount of bed space."

Immunology for undergraduates. Second edition. D. M. WEIR, M.D. (Ed.). Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1971. Pp. v. + 158. Price: 80p.

It was with interest and anticipation that the reviewer approached the task of reading this book. Interest arose from the small compact size of the manual and anticipation that one would learn in a simple brief form about the rapidly expanding subject of immunology. This anticipation was enhanced by the fact that the book was prepared for medical students in their paraclinical stage of their course and for science students.

However, the book was more difficult to read than expected. It was brief, but the disadvantage seemed to be that a great deal of information was packed into a small compass. It is written well and is very comprehensive, but the reviewer had to re-read it several times to grasp the complex background of this rapidly expanding science. One wondered, in reading this small book, whether the material was not too detailed for the needs of the average medical student although enough perhaps for the science student in microbiology.

For the general practitioner it is a good book for referral and for bringing him up to date on current knowledge in this subject. The author has included at the end of the individual chapters suggestions for further reading for those who wish to delve deeper.