

is that a very considerable number of the children appear to have been making a success of their lives at the time at which they reached the age of 18; for it is the children who have the dice loaded most heavily against them who are the ones to come into the care of the children's departments. Despite the fact that children's homes are looked after by professional sociologists, it did not surprise me to find that the social stability of those children placed in foster homes was better than those placed in institutions. It seems that an ordinary humdrum family is a better environment than the best of institutions.

Professor Ferguson's book is one of a series of monographs the research for which was paid for by the Nuffield Foundation. I have not read the other books in the series, but if they are up to the standard of *Children in care—and after* they must be well worth reading by any practitioner who is interested in the social problems that can arise, for various reasons, in the life of any of the children under his care, whatever their social background.

Medical aspects of child adoption. A collection of papers by various authorities. Standing conference of societies registered for adoption. 1966. Obtainable from: The honorary secretary, Gort Lodge, Petersham, Surrey. Pp. 58. Price 5s.

Every practitioner will be asked, from time to time, to advise on adoption. His infertile and perhaps unhappy patients may apply to adopt a child, or he may be asked to certify that the child of one of his younger patients is suitable for adoption. In either case sentiment and the desire to help his patient could bias his judgment. Is he really wise to advise a childless couple to adopt a child? He may think that it will help his patients, the proposed adopters, but is he really being fair to the child that they propose to adopt? Similarly, when he is asked to certify an illegitimate baby as being fit for adoption who is he really trying to help? The mother of the illegitimate baby or the family that will bear the responsibility for bringing this child into adult life? It is not at all simple to come to an objective and fair decision in these problems, but in this book a series of experts have discussed the problems of adoption from a scientific point of view. The ordinary practitioner, faced with an adoption problem, should be able to find, in one or other of the papers, the moral or the scientific answer to his doubts.

This is a most valuable booklet and will be of particular value to the young doctor in his early years of general practice. Some of the articles appeared in the Standing Conference Proceedings as long ago as 1955, but we are assured that they have all been brought up to date before being published in this booklet.
