

Alcoholic beverages in clinical medicine. CHAUNCEY D. LEAKE, Ph.D., and MILTON SILVERMAN, Ph.D. Chicago. Year Book Medicine Publishers Inc. London. Lloyd-Luke (Medical Books) Ltd. 1966. Pp. 160. Price 37s. 6d.

This is an up-to-date handbook on the chemistry and pharmacology of alcoholic beverages written by two experts in the field.

The indications and contraindications to the medicinal use of alcohol are clearly set out. The toxicity of alcoholic beverages are well described. The final chapter on social pharmacology, describes the cultural patterns of drinking and excessive drinking. There is an extensive, well selected authoritative bibliography of 416 references and a good index.

The authority of the comments are not to be disregarded when we are warned that alcohol is not a panacea nor is it foolproof. For those who prescribe brandy or whisky for patients with ischaemic heart disease, they say (page 63) . . . "the evidence of direct dilating effect of alcohol on the coronary arteries is not clear . . ." Concentrations of alcohol in the blood, not simply the amounts swallowed, are generally related to the overall attitude and behaviour of an individual.

"Depression of central nervous system centres, with the resultant release of inhibitions, is presumably responsible for the common belief that alcoholic beverages act as aphrodisiacs, especially in the male. There is a quotation from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

Macduff: What three things does drink especially provoke?

Porter: Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine. Lechery, sir, it provokes and unprovokes; it provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance . . ."

This book is well bound and the print is clear. It is essential in the reference library of any general practitioner who also undertakes police surgeon work. The price is high, but it is worth it.

Handbook of surgery. J. L. WILSON, M.D. and JOSEPH J. McDONALD, M.D. Third Edition. Oxford. Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1966. Pp. 723. Price 42s.

This small handbook covers briefly the whole field of surgery in its diagnostic and non-operative therapeutic aspects. The editors are on the professional staff of the American University of Beirut, and their objective has been to provide a concise summary of surgical disorders. The book is admirably set out, and for the first time that I, the reviewer, have seen, there is an extensive section on first-aid management of injuries, a subject that is rarely taught to a medical student. The print, though small, is excellent and the illustrations very clear and easy to understand. The style of writing is terse, simple and effective. There is little description of actual operative treatment except certain emergencies which demand action, but it was surprising to note that there was not a detailed description of how to perform appendicectomy, which I would have thought essential. Altogether this is a useful and valuable book, especially for the doctor going overseas and practising in an isolated place.