

Alcoholism. Its facets and phases. MARVIN A. BLOCK, M.D. London. Oxford University Press. 1965. Pp. vii + 320. Price 35s.

Alcoholism leaves me in two minds, hope and despair: hope of helping my patients and despair of ever doing so.

This book is intended as a source of information for those laymen and professionals who seek a ready reference on the subject. In scope it ranges from a discussion on the definitions of alcoholism, on why people drink, on the public health and socio-economic aspects of alcoholism, the relationship of alcoholism to the law, on treatment, on alcoholic organizations, the spouse, the clergy, the teacher in alcoholism and a useful summary on drinking habits in other countries.

Careful reading will reveal the author's deep feeling on and knowledge of drinking and the work is well larded with wisdom. Here are some scattered sentences which could be used as rules of thumb:

- (1) When the patient complains of alcoholism it is already well advanced; thus all routine histories should inquire about alcoholic habits.
- (2) The causes of alcoholism lie not in alcohol but in the individuals who drink it to excess.
- (3) Since there is no specific remedy much depends upon a strong motivation for recovery.
- (4) Drunken drivers should have full psychiatric and drinking histories taken.
- (5) It is estimated that one alcoholic patient rehabilitated into society will pay for ten others who may still require care, a sound investment.
- (6) The main treatment for the chronic alcoholic comes after the acute phase of the illness.
- (7) The alcoholic drinks because he can't help it, not because he likes it.
- (8) The understanding of the spouse is perhaps the single greatest factor in helping an alcoholic to recover.

Nevertheless, alcoholism is a world-wide problem and many doctors still feel their feet are firmly planted in mid-air when dealing with such problems.

Dr Block's book shows very well how American medical services are tackling this problem which involves, to some degree, one in 15 of the population.

Physical fitness for busy men. I. J. MACQUEEN, M.B., F.R.C.S. London. Institute of Directors Medical Centre. 1966. Pp. 32. Price 6s.

"It's no good you praying to God to guide your footsteps if you won't move your feet."

Expanding on this excellent advice, given to himself as a youth, Mr MacQueen points out that, without the necessity of formal games and athletics (on which he also writes a helpful section), much of the 'busy man's' daily routine can be converted into a series of useful keep-fit exercises.

Unfortunately some of the exercises described, especially in the chapter "Have a workout in your car" are of the static isometric type. There is

now evidence that this sort of exercise produces a marked rise in blood pressure at the time, and is therefore potentially dangerous—perhaps particularly so in that section of the community at whom the booklet is aimed. With this exception it can be recommended as a useful keep-fit guide to all busy men, not least to our own profession.

The Medical Annual, 1966. Editors: SIR RONALD BODLEY SCOTT, *K.C.V.O.*, M.A., D.M., F.R.C.P. and R. MILNES WALKER, *C.B.E.*, M.S., F.R.C.S., F.A.C.S. (Hon.)- Bristol. John Wright & Sons Ltd. 1966. Pp. xxiv + 667. Price 52s. 6d.

The eighty-fourth issue of the year-book follows the same style as its predecessors. There are special articles on gall-stones, ulcerative colitis, and wound healing. All branches of medicine are well covered. The section on general practice by doctors John Hunt and Michael Linnett deals with measles immunization. Simple and rapid pathological tests in general practice, ancillary medical workers, and special vocational training for general practice. The standard of excellence remains the same and it is recommended as the best annual of medical progress for the general practitioner.

Medical books, libraries and collectors. Second edition. JOHN L. THORNTON, F.L.A. London. Andre Deutsch Ltd. 1966. Pp. xvi + 445. Price £4 4s.

Those who take an interest in medical history in any degree at all must sooner or later find themselves beset by the difficulty in obtaining reliable information on many of the problems with which they find themselves confronted. If they do not wish to consult sources, and these are so often difficult to find without the resources of a well-equipped library, they have to consult a bibliography, but the average bibliography is dry meat except for the voracious book collector. Mr Thornton has produced a work which should fill the need of most of those who wish a guide through the maze of medical literature. In the small space of 445 pages he has condensed an enormous amount of information not readily to be come upon elsewhere. Furthermore, he has brought his material right up to date. In so vast a subject what to leave out must have been a greater difficulty than deciding what to include. Each reviewer will look for mention of those subjects in which he is especially interested, and each collector will look particularly for the inclusion of those books which have become his warm favourites and have occupied an honoured space on his shelves. In so wide a work disappointment is bound to happen. This reviewer misses any mention of the translation of Sydenham's works by Thomas Swan, and would have liked to have read something of that quaint compiler and translator of the medical treatises of the surgeons and apothecaries of his day, William Salmon "professor of physick", nor is there a mention of that cataloguer of surgical instruments Johannis