

- paediatrics and other specialties.*
- July 6-7 *Geriatric week-end course*, Northern General Hospital, Sheffield, 5.
- July 8-13 *Course in obstetrics*, Jessop Hospital and Northern General Hospital, Sheffield.

Applications to the *Postgraduate Dean, Faculty of Medicine, The University, Sheffield, 10.*

Book Reviews

Encyclopaedia of general practice. Service volume. Edited by G. F. ABERCROMBIE, *V.R.D.*, M.A., M.D. and R. M. S. MCCONAGHEY, *O.B.E.*, M.D. London. Butterworth & Co. 1967. Pp. ix + 199. Price £2 10s. 0d. standard, £2 17s. 6d. de luxe.

The editors and publishers must be warmly congratulated on the scheme and contents of this first service volume as it is called. If any justification were needed for the ambitious conception of the six volumes of the Encyclopaedia of General Practice this is it, for it is the means of enriching the articles in the original work and filling the inevitable hiatus as medical thought and experience advance. The division into 'New articles' and the smaller section called 'Cumulative supplement' offer new subjects in the first and additional material for those already dealt with, but avoids recapitulation of past work. This promises more soundly-planned volumes for the future.

All the articles on new subjects are of value and some are outstanding in the presentation of the material. Chronic bronchitis by Ian Gregg is one of these. The importance of the subject in this country has often been blurred by confusion in assessment of causes, diagnosis and treatment. In 15 pages of clear exposition the reader is given well-defined lines for the prognosis and management of one of the commonly presenting long-term and lethal conditions. Prediabetes by D. L. Crombie also has the quality of illuminating a dim subject, so continually in the mind of the generalist.

Preparing papers for publication by R. M. S. McConaghey offers precious advice by one who adds wit to his own experiences both as author and editor. The article on evolution of the National Health Service during 1965 and 1966 by E. V. Kuenssberg shows exceptional enterprise by the editors in including it, on a subject so relevant to our work and yet external to the clinical field. It is vividly written by one who was very intimately involved in the medicopolitical events of those years and simultaneously one of the leaders of The Royal College of General Practitioners in research and educational developments. These recent negotiations have resulted in improved circumstances for the work of general practitioners and lead us to look forward to greater opportunities for the scope and application of medicine in the general and community fields.

Though the reviewer has selected only a few articles for comment in this section the rest, predominantly pathological, diagnostic and pharmacological in approach are all important both in matter and angle of view for readers in different departments of medical work.

The cumulative supplement concentrates on new legislation in relation to

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drugs and poisons (R. Goulding) and, by the author of the section in the main work, on tetanus and leprosy, J. W. G. Smith. All reveal the usefulness of the design for future volumes. Bibliographies throughout must be valuable for those deeply involved with these special interests. The index is easy to use as in the original publications.

This book is of great use as a single volume, apart from its special value in maintaining the currency of the original publication.

Men in middle life. KENNETH SODDY with MARY C. KIDSON. London. Tavistock Publications. 1967. Pp. xii + 485. Price 63s. 0d.

This is one of the cross cultural studies in mental health and is described as "Based on the study made by the one time Scientific Committee of the World Federation for Mental Health".

This book is not an easy one to read for two reasons. First because of its sources as set out in the subtitle above, the text includes endless references in parenthesis. Though disturbing to uninformed concentration it may well be less so than the interruption of endless footnotes. Secondly, again due to the background material the range of human material is great both in social and cultural differences, and from nations whose immediate past history affecting the lives of their middle-aged members is variable. Nevertheless, it is the study of these different influences that reveal the variations in attitude of men and women between 40 and 60 to the younger generation and to the family situations they experience. The contrasts in national background to the development of the middle-aged who grew up in say Imperial Austria or as an underdeveloped race, is shown to affect attitudes to their descendants reared in modern, tiny Austria or in rapid emergence from primitive conditions, that can be disturbingly significant to their societies.

Once involved the more uninformed medical reader can find that absorption increases, and that relevance of the discussions and the subject matter to our own work and to our personal and family lives is very great. The main title is somewhat misleading since exploration of development up to maturity with the changing claims of industrial sophistication is obviously an important part of the book. The description of *rites de passage* of this transitional phase of living under varying circumstances is absorbing, in addition to their effects on attitudes in the middle age that succeeds them in time. Equally the interest of adjustments to retirement and involution, so soon to follow, is a natural part of the problems to be faced or evaded by all who approach them.

There is need for investigations, very long term, on such matters as adolescent friendship patterns affecting the behaviour of the same individuals 20 years later. Other unknowns are the ages of the greatest enjoyment in different cultures, the effect of the impact of mass media on different phases, causes and results of social change and adaptability to it at different individual ages. These are a very few of the large areas of the unknown among the population for whom we care as family doctors. Our daily work brings us up against rigidity of thought and action, but how little do we tend to consider the family and the social habits that influence or arise from it.

The overlap of subject matter with our own day-to-day knowledge of reactions in situations related to illness and stress is huge and could initiate new lines of research where time in terms of decades is the index. There is a rich and international bibliography and a useful index.