

The gold-headed cane. WILLIAM MACMICHAEL. London. The Royal College of Physicians. 1968. Pp. 179. Price £4. For fellows and collegiate members of the R.C.P. £2.

The gold-headed cane first belonged to John Radcliffe who died in 1714 and was presented by him to Richard Mead as his successor as the leading physician of the time. From Mead it passed to Askew, then to Pitcairn and, lastly, to Matthew Baillie who donated it to the Royal College of Physicians where it has been lodged ever since. The story of the cane is told in the words of the cane itself and was published anonymously by the author, Dr William Macmichael. It is a gossipy, but yet a valuable history of medicine and medical practice during the eighteenth century—a classic which has been reprinted a number of times.

This reprint is of the first edition of 1827 and is a facsimile of the author's copy with his manuscript notes of additions which he intended to insert in the second edition of 1828. Its value lies in the fact that not all of these were included. The second edition was reprinted in 1915 with an introduction by Sir William Osler, who there remarks that Macmichael leaves us in doubt as to when William Pitcairn died. In the manuscript notes in the College of Physicians' edition the date is stated to be 1791. Also in the margin in places are references to the sources of material used by Macmichael. An essay by Dr Thomas Hunt, the great grandson of the author, gives much interesting information concerning Macmichael and there is a beautifully reproduced portrait of him on the frontispiece.

Victory with vaccines. The story of immunization.

H. J. PARISH, M.D., F.R.C.P.E., D.P.H., HON.F.R.S.H. Edinburgh and London. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. 1968. Pp. ix+245. Price 30s.

The practical application of immunization has saved more lives than any other advance in medicine. Dr H. J. Parish has already written a full history of immunization for the professional man. This sequel is primarily for the intelligent layman, but it is excellent reading for the practising doctor. Many chapters bring the subject right up to date, and those who have not had the time to follow the progress of development of the newer techniques will find Dr Parish's clear exposition most helpful.

A symposium on carbenoxolone sodium at the Royal Society of Medicine, 20 November 1967. Edited by J. M. ROBSON and F. M. SULLIVAN. London. Butterworths. 1968. Pp. xiv + 263.

It is rarely that such high-powered sounding titles of such special limited fields are of relevance to general practitioners. Here is the exception. Duodenal ulcers and gastric ulcers form a large component of general-practice work, thus any discussion of carbenoxolone sodium is very relevant: but a concise book, which relates in the crisp style of the true expert the pros and cons of therapy, is particularly welcome in these days of flowery literature by drug manufacturers.

Avery Jones gives carbenoxolone sodium its true perspective in the volume's general introduction by saying that gastric ulcer patients' treatment is considerably facilitated and thus patients can be treated as outpatients. There are contributions by Richard Doll and many of the leading investigators in gastroenterology and pharmacology. It is fascinating to read how the interest in liquorice has eventually led to this disease-specific compound. This book contains a lucid description of what a therapeutic trial should be.