

Notes on Books

*Poet Physicians: An Anthology of Medical Poetry* written by Physicians, has been compiled by MARY LOU McDONOUGH, and is published at \$5.00 by Charles C. Thomas, of Springfield, Illinois, U.S.A. The task was heavy but congenial, and though a lot of poor stuff is included there are also some lovely short pieces. Mrs. McDonough tried to restrict the scope of the book to "medical poetry," but she has been hard put to it to find any lines by, for example, Keats or Goldsmith which could come within that definition. By contrast, "On a Dead Child," by Robert Bridges, one of the most poignant poems in our language, could probably only have been written by one who had been a children's physician, as Sir Arthur MacNalty said lately in his address on "Medical Poets." From the great but scattered mass of verse, bad and good, composed by medical men through the ages, Mrs. McDonough has chosen enough to make an agreeable bedside book. Each of the 110 authors held in her net is introduced with a brief biography, and the volume ends with a memorandum on medical poets by Dr. Merrill Moore, a selected bibliography, and a cumulative index of poet-physicians running to 12 columns of small type. The preface, dated Washington, Nov. 15, 1944, makes grateful acknowledgment to much help from many friends. To anyone who carps at her final choice out of an enormous field the compiler can fairly rejoin (in the words of Dr. Moore) that most medical verse is junk, that she has found this out, and that she has spared the reader 20 poems for every one included; also (in her own words) that she has tried to bring together representative poems from as many languages and from as many eras in the history of medicine as space and exigency make possible.

Dr. LYNN THORNDIKE, of Columbia University, has devoted scholarship of a high order to editing *The Herbal of Rufinus*, and the result is a handsome book published by the University of Chicago Press. Mr. Francis S. Benjamin junior transcribed the Latin text from a rotograph of the Rufinus codex of the late thirteenth century and traced most of the citations under the direction of the editor, who supplies a learned introduction and five classified indexes. Although the book of Rufinus remained unknown to modern scholars and to historians of botany and of materia medica until Dr. Thorndike saw the manuscript in 1931 at Florence, it is a work of originality and independent value. Another reason for making his *De Virtutibus Herbarum* available in printed form is that in its quotations from past authorities Rufinus introduces the reader to a hitherto unknown version of Dioscorides. The agents for the book in this country are the Cambridge University Press and the price is 30s.

Dr. R. R. TRAIL'S little book *Chest Examination* was written mainly to correlate the anatomy and physiology of the lungs with the physical findings—clinical and radiological. It first appeared in 1943, with a foreword by Sir Walter Langdon-Brown, and now comes to us in a second edition. Illustrative skiagrams have been added, and there are some changes in the order of the text. The illustrations, half-tone or line block, now number 100. J. and A. Churchill are the publishers and the price is now 12s. 6d.

Dr. ALBERT H. ROWE, of San Francisco, whose writings on allergy are well known to workers in that subject, has produced a second edition of his handbook *Elimination Diets and the Patient's Allergies* (Kimpton; 17s. 6d.). So many changes and additions have been made that the text is now entirely reset. Dr. Rowe continues to insist that his trial diets for the identification of possible food allergy should be used as a diagnostic aid, just as blood counts and other laboratory tests are employed in routine clinical pathology, and that detailed menus and special recipes are needed to make possible the total exclusion of all foods eliminated from the diet. He discusses the whole matter in great detail, and in this edition the instructions for elimination diets have been modified to meet wartime shortages of various foodstuffs.

The *Garnered Sheaf* is a little book of verses by Dr. J. SACKVILLE MARTIN, published at 3s. 6d. by Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd., temporarily housed at Ilfracombe. Many of the short poems are reprinted from the *Poetry Review* or from *Poetry of To-day*. The author has a turn for occasional verse in varying forms; the language is simple, and the mood ranges from tender meditation to playfulness.

The Friends Ambulance Unit has issued from 4, Gordon Square, London, W.C.1, a report of the work done in Europe and the East in September, October, and November, 1945. The F.A.U. comprises 700 men and women who have organized themselves for the relief of suffering wherever it occurs. The first winter of peace is expected to be a period of more widespread misery than any of the wartime winters.

Preparations and Appliances

A CORRECTIVE SPLINT FOR PARALYSIS OF THE THENAR MUSCLES

Mr. J. RUSSELL NAPIER, M.R.C.S., registrar P.N.I. Unit, and chief assistant Orthopaedic Unit, Hill End Hospital (St. Bartholomew's), St. Albans, writes:

This splint is designed to maintain the thumb in a position of function when the thenar muscles are paralysed and at the same time to allow the antagonist muscles to be exercised.

The splint is built round a spong-rubber wedge covered with soft leather that fits into the first interosseous cleft, maintaining the thumb in abduction. The wedge is anchored in position by two leather rings that slip over the index finger and thumb. Attached to the volar-radial aspect of the thumb ring is a strip

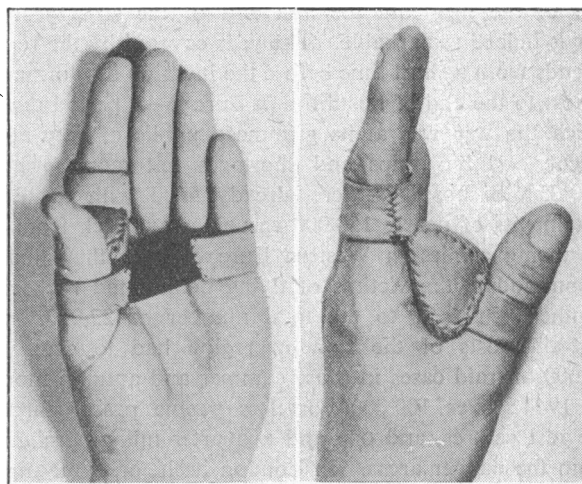


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

of elastic (approximately 2 in. x 3/4 in. : 5 x 2 cm.) which terminates in a third leather ring which fits over the little finger. The leather ring for the index finger should fit loosely enough to allow it to rotate round the finger when the thumb is abducted (Fig 3).

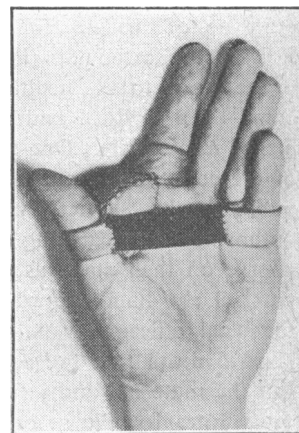


FIG. 3

When the splint is in position the thumb is maintained in the mid-position of rotation (Figs. 1 and 2). The flexibility of the wedge allows a certain degree of palmar abduction and the stretch of the elastic allows a full range of radial abduction (Fig 3), both these movements being performed against resistance.

Its construction throughout of soft materials eliminates the risk of pressure disturbances on insensitive bearing areas of skin, and permits a complete freedom of all unaffected movements of the wrist and hand.

A criticism that might be levelled against the splint is that it has no fixed anchorage, with the result that the little finger tends to be pulled into flexion and rotation at the metacarpophalangeal joint. Providing that the hypothenar muscles are unaffected, as they would be in a pure median palsy, the disadvantage is very slight and easily outweighed by the advantages of a flexible splint.

I wish to thank Messrs. Beckett and Bird Ltd., of 8, Bentinck Street, London, W.1, for their co-operation.

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