

Reviews

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF POISONING

Clinical Toxicology: The Clinical Diagnosis and Treatment of Poisoning. By S. Locket, M.B., B.S., M.R.C.P. With special sections by W. S. M. Grieve, M.Sc., Ph.D., F.R.I.C., and S. G. Harrison, B.Sc. (Pp. 772+xii; illustrated. £5 5s.) London: Henry Kimpton. 1957.

Most works on toxicology are written by experts in forensic medicine, pathologists, biochemists, or public-health officers who have little personal experience of treating cases of poisoning, or by pharmacologists whose experience is confined to animals and not to patients. This book is different in that it is written by a physician actively engaged in the practice of clinical toxicology and who admits patients suffering from poisoning to his acute general medical wards so that they are treated basically on the same lines and by the same sort of methods as are employed in standard medical practice, which is all to the good. Most of us should know more about poisoning than we do; for example, it has been estimated that in many countries the number of adult males requiring treatment for alcoholism vastly exceeds those in need of treatment for tuberculosis, yet in most medical schools a great deal of formal instruction is given on the latter condition and very little about the former. In England and Wales alone in 1953 there were 2,888 suicidal and 932 accidental deaths from poisoning, and probably at least 2% of all medical admissions to hospital are due to this cause. This book, which contains much useful information, is therefore to be welcomed, but unfortunately it is written in somewhat careless English—sometimes in a florid, complicated style, and at others relapsing into a series of notes in the imperative tense. The subjects considered range over a wide field, and include industrial chemicals, agents used in warfare, venoms, poisonous plants, and therapeutic substances. Every necessary step in treatment is enumerated. The author states that the fear which most practitioners have of treating a case of poisoning is unjustified, since the therapeutic principles are simple. It must be confessed, however, that the directions which follow for the management of a large number of emergencies are hardly calculated to allay the ordinary practitioner's misgivings, since the therapeutic agents advised are so seldom to hand, and he may well quail at the thought of continuing artificial respiration in a case of carbon monoxide poisoning till the patient recovers or is indubitably dead "because of the presence of rigor mortis." The text contains two sections written by experts on the identification of common toxic substances (arsenic and carbon monoxide are not included) and of poisonous plants. The work is handsomely produced with good illustrations and is well documented, but in the numerous references throughout the text the authors' names are printed in capitals, which serves no particularly useful purpose and gives the pages an unsightly appearance.

D. M. DUNLOP.

A SOCIAL STUDY OF TEENAGERS

In Their Early Twenties: A Study of Glasgow Youth. By T. Ferguson and J. Cunnison. (Pp. 110+vi. 12s. 6d.) Published for the Nuffield Foundation by the Oxford University Press. 1956.

This is the second volume of a study made by the authors in which they have tried to present a picture of the life-histories of a number of Glasgow boys since they left school at the age of 14 in 1947. Like the earlier volume, *The Young Wage Earner* (1951), the method of inquiry and the manner of presentation are almost exclusively statistical and hence somewhat tough reading even for the expert. In the case of the present volume one cannot help wondering why such a large steam-roller has been employed to crack so small a nut, for the few significant findings could have

been compressed to advantage within the limits of an article. These findings are, however, of vital interest and deserve the attention of administrators, legislators, and all concerned with the ordering of our society.

The study concerns 568 of the original group of 1,349 school-leavers and the record of their careers between the ages of 17 and 22. In essence it is an acute comparison between the group of 346 lads who were called up for so-called National Service and 222 others who were rejected as medically unfit. Incidentally many sidelights are thrown upon the lives of urban youth which add to the depressing picture painted by other investigators in other parts of the country. (Cf. *Some Young People*, by Pearl Jephcott. Allen and Unwin, 1954.) The picture is almost exclusively confined to passive entertainment, lack of cultural pursuits, incidental delinquency, and a generally ambitionless existence. It has to be remembered, however, that these Glasgow youths were born in the lean years of the early 'thirties, grew up to inherit the storms of the war-ravaged 'forties, and may not, therefore, be entirely characteristic of the present rising generation. Amongst the most valuable findings of this study is the fact that as many as 21% of the Glasgow men called up for the Services were seriously unsettled on returning to civilian life and found difficulty in re-establishing themselves in suitable employment. On the other hand, the boys who had been medically exempt, although inferior in many ways at the age of 17, revealed a more satisfactory employment record at the age of 22. Most serious fact of all with regard to the National Servicemen was the great loss of skill upon return to civilian life. Only 59% of those boys in skilled work or serving apprenticeships at the age of 17 were following skilled occupations by the age of 22, and this movement away from skill took place "at all levels of scholastic ability." By contrast the men who had stayed at home had successfully retained their proportion of skilled workers, and so far as the above-average boys are concerned their proportion of skilled workers had actually increased.

The implications of this careful investigation, however quietly stated, cannot be ignored. The nation is losing skill, and one of the contributing factors is undoubtedly the effects of National Service experience. Whether it results from a mental attitude of laziness or of temperamental unsettledness resultant upon military life, or derives from other causes, we do not yet know. But, as the authors tactfully point out, this is not a matter for the Service chiefs to settle or even to consider. In so far as it concerns the whole future of our national economy it is the concern of every thinking citizen, of every employer, economist, and politician. Ways must be found for preventing this wastage of skill amongst the late teenagers conscripted for military service, and research into the whole business of National Service, and its concomitant psychological and social consequences for the whole community, is a matter of some urgency at the moment.

J. B. MAYS.

PROBLEMS OF VISION IN FLIGHT

The Problems of Vision in Flight at High Altitude. By Thomas C. D. Whiteside, Ph.D., M.B., Ch.B. (Pp. 162+xvi; illustrated. 35s.) London: Butterworths Scientific Publications for and on behalf of the Advisory Group for Aeronautical Research and Development, North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 1957.

The problems of vision in high-altitude flying are manifold, and, indeed, are increasing from day to day as higher and higher altitudes and greater and still greater speeds are attained in aeroplanes. This monograph by Thomas Whiteside, sponsored by the Aeromedical Panel of the Advisory Group for Aeronautical Research and Development, is therefore not only of considerable theoretical interest from the point of view of visual physiology, but of great practical importance for both military and civil flying personnel. The author has spent a lot of time in research on the problems involved, and much of the book deals with his own original work. In flying in the stratosphere two curious problems