REVIEWS

The Hospital in Contemporary Life. Edited by NATHANIEL W. FAXON, M.D. 1949. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Pp. 288. (27s. 6d.)

This book contains contributions from eight members of the staff of the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Faculty of the Harvard Medical School, based on a series of lectures delivered in January, 1948, under the sponsorship of the Lowell Institute in Boston.

In the United States of America one in every ten persons is admitted annually to a hospital. Considered purely as a "business", the hospitals rank as the fifth largest in the country with an investment of some four billion dollars; yet in 1940, on an average, each citizen spent only \$4.63 on hospital care, compared with \$10.71 for patent medicines, \$24.36 for tobacco, and \$62.10 for liquor. This is in a country where even a patient in the public ward may be required to pay almost the full cost of his maintenance.

Three broad fields are covered by the writers of this book: the development of the hospital from earliest times, and its gradual change from a House of Pity for the poor, sick, and dying, to its present function as a curative centre for the treatment of disease; the cost and management of hospitals by state and private charity; and the place taken by the teaching hospitals in medical education. The whole picture of the present-day status and function of the hospital is skilfully built up and critically appraised in the light of modern knowledge and social needs. To select individual contributions from such a galaxy may seem invidious, but particularly absorbing are the chapters on "The Development of the Hospital" by Dr. Edward D. Churchill; "The Care of the Patient" by Dr. Leland S. McKittrick; and "The Education of the Doctor" by Dr. Oliver Cope.

This book is addressed primarily to the layman, but it is so full of medical information and stimulating ideas that no doctor could fail to read it with interest and profit.

CATHERINE SWANSTON

United Nations Department of Social Affairs: Annual Report on Child and Youth Welfare, 1947-1948. 1949. United Nations Publications, Lake Success, New York. P. v+308. (15s.)

This volume contains the full texts of the reports submitted by 26 nations on the progress made in their respective countries in the field of child and youth welfare. Part I gives detailed information concerning a wide range of activities. Of particular interest is the Russian report. Couched in a somewhat flamboyant phraseology which contrasts oddly with the stiff, official language of the other contributions, it recounts the social advances made by the Soviet state since the October revolution, and describes the havoc wrought by the invading German armies in the recent war, and the tremendous amount of repair work which has been necessary.

Part II is devoted to summaries of texts of legislation relating to child and youth welfare enacted in 1947. These are conveniently grouped by the subject of legislation, each country being noted separately.

This is an important reference book for all those concerned with the social welfare of the child and adolescent.

CATHERINE SWANSTON

Researches on the Measurement of Human Performance. By N. H. MACKWORTH. 1950. Med. Res. Council. Spec. Rep. Ser. No. 268. H.M.S.O. Pp. 156, 58 figs. 4s.

During the recent war, Dr. Mackworth and his colleagues were set to tackle two very practical problems:

- (1) What happens when men are required over long periods of time to watch or listen for hardly distinguishable signals occurring irregularly at unpredictable intervals? Vigilance of this sort was demanded of the radar-observer and the Asdic operator in the endless search for submarines.
- (2) What happens when sensory, intellectual, or muscular work has to be kept up for a long time under increasingly difficult environmental conditions, as, for example, when men are submitted to high concentrations of irritant or harassing agents, or have to withstand extremes of heat or humidity?

This report gives practical answers to some of these questions raised by the conditions of modern war, but its importance far exceeds the limits of the specific problems studied. For here is the outline of psychological and physiological methods readily adaptable to the study of problems of human efficiency under a great variety of circumstance, both in war and in peace. Dr. Mackworth treads the boundary line between psychology and physiology with confidence. Students of both disciplines will long find it useful to refer back to this pioneer work.

R. PASSMORE