

Euthanasia—a Search for Truth

Your Death Warrant? The Implications of Euthanasia. Ed. Jonathan Gould. (Pp. 144; £1.50.) Geoffrey Chapman. 1971.

This book is about euthanasia. It is written by a number of authors, mostly non-medical, all Catholic, but within the limitations of a strictly Catholic point of view it does seek to present the evidence against the legalizing of euthanasia fairly and realistically, emphasizing, of course, the difficulties, or perhaps the impossibility, of framing suitable laws and the practical difficulties and moral objections to deliberately terminating a patient's life. It gives a fair account of the debate in the House of Lords (1969) on Lord Raglan's Bill, which was not given a second reading.

Some of the arguments put forward could, of course, be countered, but it is not the reviewer's task to do this. Some criticisms can, however, be made.

The distinction between euthanasia and voluntary euthanasia is not always clearly made, yet they are totally different—at any rate to those who feel that there are arguments in favour of the latter under exceptional circumstances. There are the usual lengthy arguments about the relief of pain in the dying and the incurable, for which, in the reviewer's opinion no legal action is necessary, and almost no consideration is given to the really crucial case for voluntary euthanasia, which (it is not realized) is something a person wants for the sake of others, not for his own relief. In other words, the question is not "do I want to be kept alive in pain and suffering?" but "do I want my wife and family to have to nurse me and care for me perhaps for years if I am afflicted by a stroke which robs me of speech and intelligence and the power to look after my basic bodily needs?" This question is never fairly faced and was largely overlooked in the 1969 debate, which

also centred on relief for incurable cancer.

This being said, the book is grievously marred by some features which I surmise were not devised by the serious and sincere people who wrote it, and may even have shocked them. Its title is distasteful and provocative, the jacket shows a horrifying picture of a half-doctor, half-executioner, and the writer of the blurb on the jacket (which after all most readers will read first) has allowed himself to sink to the level of a false antithesis. And, worst of all, Cardinal Heenan, in a preface wholly out of keeping with the high tone and reserved writing of the book, makes no distinction between voluntary and involuntary euthanasia, links it clearly with lying, fornicating, and selling drugs to children (the words are his), and then says "So keep religion out of it. Just read about this plan to kill you and anyone else who becomes old or incurably sick."

PLATT

Neurological Diagnosis and Management

Clinical Neurology. 6th edn. Bernard J. Alpers, M.D., and Elliott L. Mancall, M.D. (Pp. 1072; £12.50.) Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1971.

Dr. Bernard Alpers of Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, is one of the highly-respected "elder statesmen" of American neurology whose clinical acumen, wise counsel, and able teaching have combined to inspire generations of undergraduate and postgraduate students. When I was a young travelling fellow briefly visiting his department in 1954, and Dr. Alpers modestly presented me with a copy of the third edition of his book on clinical neurology, I was touched by his generosity and could not fail, like so many before me, to be infected by his enthusiasm for the clinical arts embodied in the study and practice of neurology. On many occasions subsequently, I had occasion to consult the pages of his gift and found it a competent and workmanlike though rather conventional textbook, perhaps, surprisingly, a little lacking in the atmosphere of excitement and enthusiasm one would have expected from the author's bedside expertise. It

was therefore interesting to see in this sixth edition, published 17 years later, how the text has been reshaped, rejuvenated, and modified by Dr. Alpers and his vigorous younger collaborator, Dr. Elliott Mancall.

This new edition is a comprehensive, logically-arranged, and well written text which is well up to date both in its content and in the well selected references which complete each section. The difference between the two editions is remarkable, reflecting not only the many advances which have occurred in neurological medicine in the intervening 17 years, but also the changing approach to neurological diagnosis and management which has so greatly affected all who practise this specialty. To take but a few examples, the use of levodopa in Parkinsonism is discussed (though more information on dosage and side-effects could usefully have been given), as is the role of measles virus in subacute sclerosing panencephalitis, and many new syndromes are mentioned, even though the book is only some 120 pages longer than it was 17 years ago. Perhaps there are a number of places where treatment (if only symptomatic) and management of the progressive degenerative diseases

could have been more fully considered, and in the rather vague section on herpes simplex encephalitis there is no comment upon measures which can sometimes be life-saving. The brief comments upon the management of status epilepticus too would have been better expanded with more specific advice. There are also a few sections which still have a slightly archaic air, such as the relatively lengthy section on sphenopalatine neuralgia, while in the chapter on "neuritis" I would have preferred to see much more comment on the broad differentiation between demyelinating and axonal neuropathies and upon the value of measurements of conduction velocity in differential diagnosis.

But one must accept that no textbook ever written could be immune from criticism. At the present time the undergraduate and postgraduate student has many neurological texts of medium length and scope from which he can choose. He who chooses Alpers and Mancall will not go far wrong; he will learn a great deal about traditional (and modern) American neurology and will only rarely be misled.

JOHN N. WALTON

SHORTER NOTICES

The papers given at three training conferences held by the Family Planning Association in the autumn of 1970 have been gathered together into a book entitled *Contraception Today*. At each meeting a number of experts gave papers on different methods of contraception—oral, mechanical, chemical, and sterilization in both sexes; the problems these methods entail, including side effects; and allied subjects such as gynaecological carcinomata, record keeping, and research. At the conclusion of each session the papers were discussed in small groups and questions arising were put to the speakers. Both questions and answers are included in the book.

Each contributor is an expert in his field, and the spectrum of specialties ranges from statistics to dermatology, with surgery, psychiatry, endocrinology, and many others in between. The result is a book covering many aspects of family planning useful to expert and general practitioner alike. (*Contraception Today*, ed. A. J. Smith, M.B., assistant editor *British Medical Journal*. (Pp. 184; £1.) F.P.A. 1971.)

Physical and Mental Assessment is the first in a series of information handbooks to be issued by the National Children's Bureau. The author, Dr. Jessie Parfit, is the information officer of the Bureau and was formerly principal medical officer to the Inner London Education Authority. She

visited a number of special assessment centres in Britain—local authority and otherwise—and the present volume consists of a report on each one giving details of its inception, organization, and professional staff. The particular points she takes up are the methods used for early identification of children with different forms of handicap, the roles of the social and psychiatric services, and where the continuing responsibility lies.

The value of the book as a guide and reference is completed by a section of abstracts of some of the current literature relating to all aspects of handicapped children and their environment. (*Spotlight on Physical and Mental Assessment*. Jessie Parfit. (Pp. 100; 90p.) National Children's Bureau. 1971.)

sophisticated culture techniques and tests for the detection of biochemical abnormalities in cells from amniotic fluid. Further studies should be undertaken also on the composition, production, and circulation of amniotic fluid at all stages of pregnancy.

Nobel Prize for Medicine

Professor Earl W. Sutherland, professor of physiology at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, Nashville, Tennessee, since 1963, has been awarded the 1971 Nobel prize for physiology and medicine "for his discoveries concerning the mechanisms of the action of hormones." He began his hormone research 25 years ago, collaborating at first



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with Professor C. F. Cori, an American joint winner of the 1947 prize, and he is the forty-third American to receive the award, worth £36,000. This is the first time for ten years that the prize has not been shared. Professor Sutherland, who is 55, was born in Kansas and he received his medical education at Washington University School of Medicine, graduating M.D. in 1942. After service as a medical officer in the U.S. Army, 1943-5, and various posts and assistant professorships at Washington University he was from 1953 to 1963 professor of pharmacology and director of the department at the Western Reserve University School of Medicine, Cleveland, Ohio. (For comments on his scientific work see the leading article on page 188).

Seminars at B.M.A. House

A seminar on geriatrics will be held at B.M.A. House, London, on Wednesday, 10 November, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For details see advertisement on page iv.

B.M.A. Conference Competition

A competition on the most popular items at B.M.A. Scientific or Clinical Meetings is open to any doctor in the U.K. The three prizes provide free return air travel to Nicosia and first-class hotel accommodation for the winner and wife or friend during the East Mediterranean Medical Congress, 11-15 April 1972. The closing date for entries is 10 December, and forms are available from the Executive Officer (Cyprus Meeting), B.M.A. House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP.

People in the News

Brigadier S. H. Janikoun, late R.A.M.C., has been appointed Honorary Surgeon to the Queen.

COMING EVENTS

Royal College of Physicians of London.—Growing points in medicine session on "Blood Pressure Regulation, Sodium and the Kidney," by Dr. C. J. Dickinson, 27 October, 2 p.m. For details see advertisement on page xxiii.

Royal College of Physicians of London.—Teaching, "Neonates," 2 November, 8 p.m. For details see advertisement on page xxiii.

London University.—Course of two lectures by Professor W. McDermott (Cornell University), "Toward a Medicine that Fits," 2 and 4 November, 5.30 p.m., London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, W.C.1. Admission free, without ticket.

Queen's Institute of District Nursing.—Annual meeting, 3 November, 2.30 p.m., County Hall, London S.E.1. Tickets and details are available from the general secretary, Q.I.D.N., 57 Lower Belgrave Street, London S.W.1. (Tel. 01-730 0355.)

South-east Forum for the Use of Closed Circuit Television.—All-day meeting, "Closed Circuit Television—a Discussion on Medical Experience," 5 November, 10 a.m., B.M.A. House, London W.C.1. The proceedings will be opened by Dr. Derek Stevenson (Secretary, B.M.A.). Fee £2.50 (including lunch). Application forms, to be returned before 29 October, and details are obtainable from Mr. G. E. Thomas, City University, St. John Street, London E.C.1. (Tel. 01-253 4399, extn. 345.)

Royal College of General Practitioners (East Anglia Faculty).—Day symposium, "Communications in Medicine," 7 November, West Suffolk General Hospital, open to all medical practitioners. Applications to the honorary secretary, Dr. B. B. Reiss, 125 Newmarket Road, Cambridge CB5 8HA. (Tel. Cambridge 50198 or 54866.)

Institute of Urology.—Weekend course, "Recent Advances in Urology," 19-21 November. For details see advertisement on page xxiii.

UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

MANCHESTER

Appointments.—Dr. T. Hanley (senior lecturer, geriatric medicine); Dr. P. C. Ganguli (senior lecturer, gastroenterology, department of surgery); Dr. E. T. L. Davies (lecturer, cardiology); Dr. B. E. Boyes, Dr. C. T. A. Jones (lecturers, medicine); Mr. F. A. Strang (lecturer, neurosurgery).

APPOINTMENTS

MANCHESTER REGIONAL HOSPITAL BOARD.—Dr. T. D. O'Brien (consultant physician in geriatrics, Oldham and District group); Mr. I. A. Sewell, Mr. W. N. Samarji (consultant surgeons, Ashton, Hyde and Glossop group); Dr. J. R. Owen (consultant paediatrician, Preston and Chorley group); Dr. T. K. Ramachandran (consultant paediatrician, South Cheshire group); Dr. M. A. Rucklidge (consultant anaesthetist, North Lancs and South Westmorland group); Dr. M. H. Husaini (consultant general physician, Ashton, Hyde and Glossop group); Dr. N. M. Adam (consultant radiologist, University Hospital group of South Manchester); Dr. C. J. A. Holme (consultant radiologist, Bolton and district group); Dr. M. D. John (consultant physician in geriatrics, Blackpool and Fylde group); Dr. I. Mullock (consultant anaesthetist, South Cheshire group).

NEWCASTLE REGIONAL HOSPITAL BOARD.—Dr. V. Rogers (consultant, radiology, Durham group); Dr. J. B. Selkon (consultant, microbiology, Newcastle University group); Mr. D. Beasley (consultant, general surgeon, Hartlepool group); Mr. G. Mackay (consultant, obstetrics and gynaecology, South Shields district group); Dr. R. W. B. White (consultant, general medicine, Hartlepool group); Mr. D. W. Hand (consultant, otolaryngology, East and West Cumberland group); Dr. B. E. Welsh (consultant, anaesthetics, Newcastle University group); Mr. T. T. Win (consultant, orthopaedic surgery, South Shields district group); Dr. M. J. Tynan (consultant, paediatric cardiology, Newcastle University group).

LIVERPOOL REGIONAL HOSPITAL BOARD.—Dr. E. W. Birchall (consultant psychiatrist, Walton and Rainhill Hospitals); Dr. E. E. Gulland (consultant psychiatrist, Winwick Hospital); Dr. M. Hayward (consultant neurologist to the Regional Neurological Service, Walton Hospital); Mr. A. R. Mawdsley (consultant general surgeon, St. Helens group).

WESSEX REGIONAL HOSPITAL BOARD.—Dr. H. D. H. Eastwood (consultant in geriatric medicine); Dr. M. R. Andress (consultant radiologist); Dr. P. E. Copus (consultant in children's psychiatry).

SOCIETIES AND LECTURES

For attending lectures marked * a fee is charged or a ticket is required. Applications should be made first to the institution concerned.

Monday, 25 October

INSTITUTE OF DERMATOLOGY.—4.30 p.m., Dr. F. R. Bettley: The Epidermal Barrier.
INSTITUTE OF LARYNGOLOGY AND OTOTOLOGY.—5.30 p.m., Combined staff consultation clinical meeting.
ROYAL POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL SCHOOL.—4 p.m., Professor R. J. Linden: Catecholamines and Beta-receptor Antagonists on the Heart.

Tuesday, 26 October

INSTITUTE OF DERMATOLOGY.—4.30 p.m., Dr. A. Jarrett: Process of Keratinization.
INSTITUTE OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY.—At Hammersmith Hospital, 2 p.m., Dr. F. S. Brimblecombe: Paediatric Aspects of Small Babies. (Admission by ticket only, obtainable from secretary, Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Chelsea Hospital for Women, London, S.W.3.)*

Wednesday, 27 October

DUNDEE UNIVERSITY.—5 p.m., Mr. P. Konstam: Surgery in West Africa in its Geographical Context.
INSTITUTE OF DISEASES OF THE CHEST.—5 p.m., Lecture by Dr. B. E. Heard.
INSTITUTE OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY.—At Chelsea Hospital for Women, 9.45 a.m. Mr. R. Cox: The Gynaecologist and the Colon. (Admission by ticket only, obtainable from secretary, Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Chelsea Hospital for Women, London, S.W.3.)*
INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY.—5.30 p.m., Dr. H. H. Wolff: Psychosomatic Medicine—Basic Concepts.
INSTITUTE OF UROLOGY.—5 p.m., Mr. J. P. Williams: Malignant Disease of Kidney and Ureter.
OXFORD UNIVERSITY.—At Nuffield Maternity Home, Radcliffe Infirmary, 5 p.m., Professor P. G. Quie (Minnesota): Abnormalities of Bactericidal Function in Human Polymorphonuclear Leucocytes.
ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.—5 p.m., Arnott demonstration by Professor C. Long: The Red Cell Membrane.
ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL.—5.15 p.m., Dr. S. Erlinger (Paris): Mechanisms of Bile Secretion.
ROYAL POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL SCHOOL.—2 p.m., Professor J. Wilkinson: Recent Advances in Isoenzymes.

Thursday, 28 October

ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY.—At Foresterhill medical buildings, 5 p.m., Professor A. M. Barrett: An Aspect of β -adrenergic Blockade.
FACULTY OF HOMOEOPATHY.—At Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital, 5 p.m., symposium: Homoeopathic Treatment of Depression.
LONDON HOSPITAL MEDICAL COLLEGE.—4.30 p.m., Schorstein memorial lecture by Professor Dorothy S. Russell: Fads, Fancies and Facts.*
ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.—5 p.m., Thomas Vicary lecture by Mr. N. Capener: Chaucer and Doctor John of Gaddesden.
ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL MEDICAL SCHOOL.—5.15 p.m., Mr. P. L. C. Digory: Complications of Medically Induced Abortions.
WESTMINSTER MEDICAL SCHOOL.—5.15 p.m., Mr. F. T. de Dombal: Crohn's Disease.

Friday, 29 October

INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH.—1 p.m., Professor L. Eisenberg (Harvard): The Human Nature of Human Nature.
LONDON SOCIETY OF FAMILY PLANNING DOCTORS.—At Royal Society of Medicine, 8.15 p.m., Dr. Pauline Jackson, Mr. D. B. Whitehouse: Psychological aspects of Sterilization.
MEDICAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF VENEREAL DISEASES.—At 11 Chandos Street, London, W.1., 8.15 p.m., papers will be read by Dr. J. D. H. Mahony and Dr. J. R. W. Harris.
ROYAL POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL SCHOOL.—11 a.m., Cardiothoracic unit: departmental research; 6 p.m., Professor M. B. Laver (Massachusetts): The Oxygen Transport Concept—Fact or Fiction?

Notice to Authors

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