

The Doctor In Spite Of Himself

Medical Advice from a Backblock Hospital (1942). By G. M. Smith. Caxton Press (Christchurch).

THIS is Dr. Smith's third book and his best—provocative, witty, scrappy certainly, but very funny, and yet always sensible and helpful. If he enjoys practising his profession as much as he enjoys writing about it afterwards, being sick in Rawene must be almost as good fun as keeping well anywhere else. But some of his advice is outrageous: for example, don't bother about constipation—there is no such thing; don't bother about children who abuse themselves—the only dangerous kind of abuse is interference by parents; if the nurse says that the baby is "tongue-tied," tell her to tie her own tongue. On the other hand, not to read what he says about circumcision is to miss one of the most amusing exposures of surgical quackery in medical literature; and if you still have sides left to shake when you have recovered from that, turn to "Organ Recitals" and "The Comedy Hormonists." But do not get the idea that the book is all extravagance and farce. A good deal of it is technical; some is written by other people—nurses, an architect, a Member of Parliament; all of it is as scientific as Dr. Smith knows how to make it this year (1942). When new knowledge makes it obsolete he says he will correct and re-issue it—for it must not be forgotten that it was written primarily for the farmers and settlers of North Auckland and is in fact, the handbook of the Hokianga Co-operative Clinic Medical Service. And in spite of his propensity for jokes, Dr. Smith is a medical man first.

OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN

The Institutional Care of Dependent Children in New Zealand. By H. C. Mathew. New Zealand Council of Educational Research. Printed by Whitcombe and Tombs.

EVERY year in the first decade of this century between 300 and 400 young New Zealanders under the age of fifteen lost one or both parents. Yet, apart from some State Industrial Schools at the stage of beginning to board children out and to separate delinquents and destitutes, there existed only four refuges for orphans. Both the State and the Churches, however, took seriously this call upon their concern. But while the State concentrated almost wholly on delinquent and neglected children (Child Welfare Department), the Churches collected orphans: and to-day they conduct no fewer than 85 registered "Homes" with a yearly "turnover" of some 2500 admittances.

Building up unconnectedly in response to local needs over a period of forty years, this system is to-day solidly estab-

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arc necessary to bring the clapper into contact with the bell. Some big bells need to be vibrated for some time before they can be rung so that they are, so to speak, "warmed up" to produce the right tone.

lished. But, after all, is it the best way to care for orphans? Are the Homes in existence really fulfilling the claim in their title? What can each learn from each—what not to do as well as what to do? Believing that such a general stocktaking as questions like these lead to would be of real use, the New Zealand Council of Educational Research commissioned Mr. H. C. Mathew to make a critical survey. Hamish Mathew, now Deputy-Superintendent of one of our Borstal institutions, was indeed well qualified to consider everything about orphanages from finance to worship to food. From a business career

in Auckland he had graduated at Yale University, undergone a variety of "Social Welfare" experiences in the States, and returned to New Zealand a Presbyterian minister. His findings—published under the solemn, if exact, title of "The Institutional Care of Dependent Children in New Zealand"—show that he can combine various qualities of writing just as well as his variety of experiences. His book is short, full, detailed, clear, comprehensive, scientifically concise and humanly interesting. And since, for all his appreciation of work done and being attempted, Mr. Mathew seriously criticises certain practices—and indeed doubts the whole orphanage idea—those of us who are directly concerned as church members, or indirectly as citizens, could spend six shillings on him very profitably.

—A.M.R.

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