in the medical curriculum, but says nothing about emotional needs. It is a pity that the author lays so much stress upon the body and so little on the mind. Nevertheless the book opens a new vista and takes us a step nearer to the conception of positive health.

A.T.

Mental Health in Modern Society. By Thomas A. C. Rennie, M.D., and Luther E. Woodward, Ph.D. New York: The Commonwealth Fund. London: Oxford University Press: Geoffrey Cumberlege. 22s.

This rather ponderous book sets out to draw the lessons from the psychiatric experiences of the second world war, and to apply them to modern American Society at peace. Its first part is devoted to a survey of the psychiatric services of the armed forces and of war cases, together with problems of resettlement into civil life; it is, perhaps, a pity that these subjects, which have already received so many books and papers, occupies practically a third of the book, which could have been devoted more profitably to an amplification of the authors' views on Part II (Continuing Problems) and Part III (Sources of Help in Treatment and Prevention).

The latter in particular compels the interest of the reader by its imaginative suggestions as to the integration of various aspects of mental health; the practising physician, the social worker, the psychologist, the minister of religion, and the industrial services each receive a chapter; and examples are given of the particular scope of each, and moreover of the ways in which each can supplement the work of the other. In all this the problems are seen both from the angle of the individual and of his place in society. The result is an excellent, well-balanced and stimulating survey; though more space could, perhaps, be given to the practical difficulties of collaboration.

The authors then go on to give a valuable chapter on interviewing technique, and, a little out of place, another short and rather misleadingly facile survey of family living which perhaps would hardly persuade the reader of their own essential, "people must first be convinced of the need for maturity". The chapter on education is again disappointing, but the summary in the last chapter re-emphasizes the wider problems, sets out once more the responsibilities of the citizen and scientist, and lays down a series of practical policies for the future.

R.F.T.

Films

The Snake Pit

(Featuring Olivia de Havilland and Leo Genn)

The backwardness of the Mental Hospitals in the U.S.A. has been noted by Dr. Dallas Pratt, whose survey is quoted in our issue of February, 1949, on page 80. Up to three-quarters of the State Hospitals in America he rates as backward, but, as far as the hospitals in England are concerned, he rates only a quarter in this category. He points out that in England 50% greater expenditure on maintenance is the rule. The care of patients in the wards in America is "largely in the hands of untrained and often ignorant attendants, the proportion of graduate nurses to patients in 1946 being only 1 to 143, whereas it has apparently not occurred to the British that the nursing care of the mentally ill could conceivably be entrusted to anyone except a nurse".

Dr. Pratt, in this article, refers to the general impression of observers that English hospital patients are less disturbed, which is sometimes attributed to the phlegmatic British temperament. He suggests, however, that:

"the less disturbed character of English refractory wards is owing rather to a combination of: intelligent and humane nursing care; the frequent use of occupation and recreation (particularly out of doors activity), the absence

of mechanical restraint and other violent methods; and finally, active physical treatment, including shock therapy and, in some hospitals, prolonged narcosis."

Mary Ward, an American writer, after spending some time in a State Hospital in America, wrote her experiences down in the form of a novel—*The Snake Pit*. This title was given because it was a legend that in the middle ages insane persons at the height of their illness were put in a snake pit, after which they might begin to recover. This novel dramatizes the deficiencies of American State Hospitals and is a raw piece of literature designed, one would imagine, to arouse the American public's conscience. The American psychiatry authorities themselves are conducting campaigns to remedy the backwardness of their own mental hospitals.

20th Century Fox Film Company produced a film of the novel and it was shown for the first time in the United States in November last. The Producer and Director, Anatole Litvak, sought specialist advice during the making of the film and showed it, prior to release, to the American Psychiatric Association and to the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. Although there was