WHAT IS OSTEOPATHY?

By CHARLES HILL, M.A., M.D., and H. A. CLEGG, M.A., M.B., M.R.C.P. (with preface by H. G. WELLS). J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1937. Price 7/6.

The professors and advocates of osteopathy have recently suffered in the open market the fall promised to a vaulting ambition. Not content with some degree of popular repute, and with grateful clients and a chorus, they must needs seek to persuade the House of Lords that they, and they alone, possess the true scientific basis for medical practice, and that legislative recognition is due to them and to their cult. They issued the challenge, selected the tribunal, presented their witnesses, and argued through Counsel learned in the law. Yet rarely can a chapter of boasted pretensions have suffered a more complete and ridiculous conclusion.

It is well that the story should be placed on record, and this task Dr. Charles Hill and Dr. H. A. Clegg have effectively undertaken. Not the least valuable part of their book is that which defines the attitude of the medical profession to the various forms of "unqualified" practice; the true position on this point is here admirably stated, and the arguments and explanations should be helpful as an instrument of public education.

The authors of the book have cultivated a judicial attitude with some necessary plain speaking, and they tell the tale with artistic skill and with a due recognition both of the humorous and the dramatic. The alleged capacity of X-rays to detect the supposed œdema of a minute "osteopathic lesion", while a pint of beer in the stomach escapes the picture, brings indeed a sense of theatre.

The book deserves a wide public and the support of the medical profession. To be very critical, while we recognise in its pages many pleasing references to our classical English poets, this seems to justify the remark that what Pope deprecated was not "a little knowledge" but "a little learning".

In a short preface Mr. H. G. Wells writes of osteopathy in severe terms, and adds, for the benefit of the medical profession, some counsels charged with benevolent intentions.

THE COMMON NEUROSES.

(2nd Edition.)

By T. A. ROSS, M.D., F.R.C.P. Edward Arnold & Co., 1937. Price 10/6.

Dr. Ross, in his preface to the very welcome second edition of this well-known book, reiterates his belief that the majority of patients suffering from neurosis could be treated by general practitioners; and that this is being increasingly and successfully done is in no small measure due to his own lucid and persuasive teaching. There is probably no other work which gives such very practical and detailed advice, or which will be found of greater help when dealing with many of these cases. It has been largely rewritten, but the general scheme remains the same. In a work which is not designed for specialists, a certain dogmatism is perhaps inevitable. It may, for example, be regretted that Dr. Ross continues to draw such a sharp and fundamental distinction between neuroses and psychoses, and to make prognostic statements about both groups which are, to say the least, open to criticism. But these defects of over-simplification, though they should be borne in mind, are more than outweighed by the positive merits. Here is a clear description of how many of these difficult cases can be sanely approached and successfully treated.

AIDS TO THE TREATMENT OF DISEASES OF CHILDREN.

(7th Edition.)

By F. M. B. ALLEN, M.D., M.R.C.P. Baillière, Tindall & Cox. 1937. Price 4/6.

This book is much more than its title would suggest for it is in reality a concise treatise of the diseases of children, their causes, their pathology, their symptomatology and their treatment. It is a book which should be of great value not only to the student in providing him with a handy pocket-book of reference during the course of his hospital work but also to the busy medical practitioner.

As Dr. Allen remarks in the preface, the book was originally compiled by Dr. McGaw and he has been responsible only for the last two editions. It may be because of this fact that certain out-of-date