The author quotes the usual incidence for dementia in the elderly as being 2% in those between 65 and 69 and 10% in those over 80 but points out that the figures are not reliable because there is no way of estimating its degree nor a precise answer to the question as to when the lost mental capacity with aging becomes dementia.

Pediatric Ophthalmology Practice. 2nd edn. Eugene M Helveston and Forrest D Ellis. (Pp 361; 507 illustrations; £47.50.) C V Mosby. Distributed by Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1984.

The authors, from Indianapolis, suggest that this book should first be read completely from cover to cover. Perhaps the reading speed of doctors in America is quicker than in the UK because there are 333 pages, but the wealth of superb illustrations makes this task easier by reducing the space for text. The list of chapter contents looks the same as in 1980 but the book has been much revised and the bibliography at the end is expanded and brought up to date. There is more about the electro-oculogram and electro-retinogram, these being methods for studying the electrical response to a flash of light which are useful in assessing retinal function when the fundus is obscured, as with cataract or corneal opacities, and for testing babies who might be blind.

Hutchison's Clinical Methods. 18th edn. Michael Swash and Stuart Mason. (Pp 502; £5.50.) Baillière Tindall. 1984.

Clinical methods is not a subject at the vanguard of medical advances, but this has changed since 1980 and is a great improvement with a better format. It is, as the authors (the order of their names now reversed) say, "the fruit of much revision and some additions." A new chapter on psychiatric assessment emphasises the need to consider the patient as a person, and those on the cardiovascular system and the ear, nose, and throat are virtually new, partly due to the introduction of modern imaging

techniques and physiological tests to illustrate the working of physical signs. New illustrations include coloured photographs of skin diseases and computed tomographic scans of hydrocephalus and cerebral atrophy. Born in 1897, this book has helped generations of students and MRCP candidates to get through their examinations.

A Primer of Medicine. 5th edn. M H Pappworth. (Pp 378; £18.50.) Butterworths. 1984.

This author probably holds the record for helping candidates to pass their MRCP examination. Still concerned mainly with history taking and eliciting and interpreting clinical signs (as is stated), this edition is new in many ways. It looks different because of larger pages and more subheadings, so that reading is easier. Also, it is laced with many quiz photographs—black and white to keep the price down—and, anyway, those of many conditions are just as good without colour and may be spoiled by poor colour reproduction; the correct answers to the pictures are printed upside down at the bottom of each to avoid the reader cheating. The book remains a textbook primarily for undergraduates but postgraduates should find it useful as well. The author has rewritten the first five chapters, which are partly philosophical and deal with ethical precepts, learning and teaching clinical medicine, medical vocabulary, the art and science of diagnosis, and history taking. Not surprisingly, some statements are controversial.

If any readers have allowed a gap to occur in their reading during the summer, reassurance on the need of a break comes from a leader in a distinguished medical journal. "Whatever the difficulties of arranging a holiday it is clear that it must be considered more and more as a necessity of life only less so than food and clothing. The pressure and pace of life are unprecedented. We live through as much in a month as our forefathers did in a year. . . ." *Lancet* 1899; 12 August, p 416.

Reading for Pleasure

On keeping a resolution

G J GOLDBERG

Resolutions made on 1 January are often notoriously hard to keep, many being abandoned after months, weeks, days, or even only hours of effort. Abstaining from something fulfilling and stimulating is much less likely to produce withdrawal symptoms if a suitable substitute is to hand. So, when a year ago I resolved to read less about topics related to my work and more of wider literature, my task was made that much easier by the enormous choice open to me. Maybe because the position of my stars in the heaven in September is different from January, my resolution was firmer and easier to keep, but, whatever the reasons, I have succeeded in changing my reading habits without any loss of pleasure.

Nobel

What I chose to read over the past year was influenced by many factors, including reviews and criticisms and recommendations from friends, as well as taking note of who won this or that literary award. Recent Nobel prize winners in literature provided a mixed bag: William Golding, winner in 1983, the first English prize winner for many years, proved disappointing in *The Paper Men*, a flimsy tale of an aging English author pursued by his would be American biographer on the make, academically and financially. My disappointment was keener because I had in the past enjoyed very much his *Lord of the Flies* and *The Spire*. On the other hand, Saul Bellow's *The Dean's December* is a riveting account, by an also aging American academic, of society in Chicago, contrasted with a look at what goes on behind the Iron Curtain. Both cultures emerge as flawed and creaking, yet sustained by individual imaginative acts.

By far the most exciting discovery among Nobel prize winners

was Gabriel Garcia Marquez, ably served by Gregory Rabussa, his translator from the original Spanish to English. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is his story of a small band of South American adventurers who establish a settlement in the heart of the jungle. Marquez's description of the development of this community, and its vicissitudes, is a modern parable both sad and funny, realistic yet heavily laced with fantasy, and hard to put down. Another of his novels, *In Evil Hour*, tells of a town in an unnamed South American republic, dictatorial, corrupt, and decaying. Despite the injustice and cruelty that is rampant and angrily attacked by Marquez, he somehow tempers his rage with warmth and compassion, raising the hope that something better will emerge from the chaos and despair.

My strangest new reading experience, however, was by another Nobel laureate, Elias Cannetti. His *Auto da Fe*, in translation from German to English, is a macabre account of the fall of a distinguished scholar in Germany between the first and second world wars. His world consists of books which control and in time destroy the characters in the novel. A flavour of this bizarre work may be obtained by noting the subtitles of the three sections of the book: "A head without a world," "Headless world," and "The world in the head." Not surprisingly, a psychiatrist, the brother of the protagonist of the novel, features in the third part of the book. Although singularly successful in treating his many patients, he fails spectacularly when trying to help his brother. His comments, too, about the never ending gratitude expressed by his patients and their relatives to him for effecting cures express his doubts about his apparently always successful work, and he longs for just one of his "cures" to say: "why did you cure me?," "then it was nicer," "sane rhymes with bane," and "give me back my madness." Comments perhaps predictive of R D Laing's later ideas on mental illness.

Booker

Booker prize winner Salman Rushdie tells of the first 30 years of Indian independence through the eyes of Saleem Sinhi, born with the other midnight children, as independence was declared. *Midnight's Children* is an imaginative, compelling story, often verging into fantasy, and like much else written by Rushdie, indicts vigorously what he observes. He has in the past been adversely critical of much written by "western" authors about the evolution of Indian society. He considers that western authors apply western values and more particularly British ones to their assessment of the history of the subcontinent. Rushdie adds another view, also to some extent predetermined by his own past experiences, as are the opinions of those he criticises.

As yet there is no definitive work on "The Rise and Fall of the British Empire," but historical fiction on this theme is plentiful. Three novels by another Booker winner, J G Farrell, which impressed me greatly were, firstly, *The Siege of Krishnapur* about the bloody events of the Indian mutiny, which for the first time confronted Imperial Britain with the world it thought it ruled. The second, *Troubles*, is set in Ireland just after the first world war: the steady decay of the Anglo-Irish upper classes is mirrored by the crumbling Hotel Majestic in which the novel's characters play out their fading roles. *Singapore Grip* is a saga of the fall of Singapore to the Japanese in 1942 and completes the trilogy. The growth of the rubber industry in the Malay Peninsula, through the exploitation of the native people foreshadows the later collapse of British defences, partly at least due to the alienation of the Malaysian people. The searing descriptions of the destruction and fire wrought by the bombing of Singapore contrasts strangely with the slow disintegration of Anglo-Irish society in *Troubles*.

The filling

Sandwiched between Nobel and Booker were almost 64 different varieties, but two in particular were specially stimulating. In his biography of Ezra Pound, *The Roots of Treason*, E Fuller

Torrey attempts to answer the question of how Pound, a considerable linguist and major poet, also became a virulent anti-Semite and rabid fascist. Torrey describes Pound's capture in Italy after the second world war and his transport back to the United States, where he was to stand trial for treason, but through the intervention of influential literary friends and willing psychiatrists, a successful psychiatric defence precluded such a trial. The evidence provided by Torrey suggests strongly that Ezra Pound was not mentally ill, and almost certainly guilty of treason. Nevertheless, he did not stand trial, lived not uncomfortably in St Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington DC for 12 years, and spent the last 14 years of his life in Venice before dying at the ripe age of 87. Soviet psychiatry is rightly questioned for allowing itself to be used to fudge moral and political issues, but *The Roots of Treason* shows that western psychiatry can also be manipulated by those in power.

Finally, another non-novel by V S Naipaul, *Among the Believers*, opened one westerner's ideas to the enormous problems facing cultures that embrace Islam in their attempts to create what they consider to be just societies. The creed based on the Koran is extremely fundamentalist, and its believers seem to hope that its literal application will transform whatever is wrong into a sort of utopia. V S Naipaul writes beautifully of his travels through Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia, recording events and describing characters with acumen and feeling.

My resolution remains undiminished and my tray full.

A variable speed drive—the variability obtained by conical gearing. From *Leonardo da Vinci's Elements of the Science of Man* by Kenneth D Keele (Academic Press, \$90), which integrates Leonardo's experiments in mechanics with his anatomical drawings and studies of the movement of man and animals. Dr Keele aims by making it intelligible to show that Leonardo's science is equal to his paintings, and readers can do no better than take Leonardo's own advice: "Read me O reader if you find delight in me because I am very rarely reborn in the world. Because the patience of such a profession is found in few who may again want to reconstruct such things anew. And come O men to see the wonders which may be discovered in Nature by such studies."