body else's product. You are expected to use your experience and knowledge, and judge the case on its merits.

In the Sainsbury Survey carried out about ten years ago, it was said that about half the doctors would be prepared to adopt a drug on the basis of an interview with a representative. Although this depended to a considerable extent on whether it was just another steroid ointment or an important new compound, it was a high proportion. In making a decision about whether to use a new product, one needs to consider it in relation to other forms of treatment. This should include efficacy, toxicity, convenience, and cost. You should not, however, adopt a drug simply on the basis of an interview with a representative, but you should use him as one of your sources of information.

Obviously you will need to read about it and discuss it with your colleagues before making a final decision.

On the whole, I think that representatives do a conscientious job to the best of their ability in a system that is open to a great deal of abuse. If you disapprove strongly of anything that either he or his firm does, you should complain either to his managing director or to the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry because doing nothing implies tacit acceptance. When a company that sails close to the wind is seen to prosper, others will follow suit. Neither legal constraints nor codes of practice are fully effective controls. Doctors set the standard, and they are the arbiters of what is acceptable. As I once said in a letter to the *Lancet*, the profession gets the industry it deserves.

Reading for Pleasure

Forgetting the tedium

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My natural reaction on being invited to contribute to this series was to look again at earlier contributions. The result was merely fresh doubt about my ability—not so much to match such erudition as to write something which could appear under the same heading. Does no one admit to reading and enjoying in adult life such authors as C S Forester, or, Rider Haggard, or those works of Conan Doyle that were not devoted to the unlikely exploits of that slightly tedious detective? I certainly read all three repeatedly and with great pleasure, and I would be among the first to buy a new piece on Hornblower if such an undiscovered treasure existed. Those interests need in no way distract one from writings that inform more widely or penetrate human problems more deeply. I suspect we all have our secret enjoyments of this kind, but like to preserve a front of more elevated culture.

I do not need to extol the classics, which are there any time I can forget the tedium of all those erudite notes that engulfed Shakespeare as he used to be read at school. Shaw encompassed his own destruction with the prefaces, but then to me he is hardly a classic. Penguin Books made it all much easier and more inviting when they published paperback translations from Greek and Latin. At the other extreme, there are still a great many medical works that make pleasurable reading. So much of a doctor's reading is obligatory for him to keep abreast of change in his own specialty, or generally to make sure that that specialty is seen in perspective. It may be absorbing and stimulating for the purposes of one's own work, but it is a duty and all too often a dull one. There are many other books written about medicine and its history, or about related social services, that entertain and illumine.

An easy duty

It is less than 40 years since John Ryle moved from his regius chair at Cambridge to be the first professor of social medicine at Oxford. He was opening up medical appreciation of our co-operation with the other social services at a time when teachers of public health—concentrating on preparing post-graduate students for a statutory diploma—had not been able to do so. Since then, many sociologists and some economists have written about medicine, some of them with real insight. R M Titmuss's posthumously published lectures, *Social Policy*, and Brian Abel Smith's *Value for Money in Health Services* are perhaps the most enlivening and the easiest reading. There are writings by doctors, notably Basil Hetzel's *Health and Australian Society* and Henry Miller's *Medicine and Society*, which hold the reader, medical or not, in much the same way. Lalonde's *A New Perspective on the Health of Canadians* is more technical, but it has been such a stimulant to fresh thinking in every country, despite its mere 76 pages, that it must be seen as something apart from the mass of health-care books. The most chastening for us, girding at our current inconveniences, and yet of great interest and importance for the future, is WHO's soft cover collection of essays edited by Newell under the title *Health by the People*; it, too, is reading for pleasure.

Many doctors have written entertainingly of their own interests in medicine, but there is one group of short books which includes several outstanding essays anyone might read in an evening for pleasure. The Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust sponsors an annual fellowship in memory of Ernest Rock Carling. It has given us a few medical philosophical gems, of which Robert Platt's *Doctor and Patient*, Richard Doll's *Prevention of Cancer*, Cochrane's *Effectiveness and Efficiency*, and Dollery's recent *The End of an Age of Optimism* have appealed to me most.

History and archaeology

The great mass of available publications naturally has none of these medical overtones and in it we find most of our reading for pleasure. My own particular interests—extending over 60 years

—are in history and archaeology. G M Trevelyan's *English Social History* helps to take me away from the arid accumulation of facts—most of them military and partisan English—which spoilt the subject for many of my age group at school. H A L Fisher's *History of Europe* broadened my view a little, but it was a textbook of a kind. Now there are so many good and readable accounts of every past and present civilisation we know. Stephen Runciman's *History of the Crusades* is compelling reading, if not taken in one gulp, and it fills many of the gaps left by sketchy presentation at school concerning a topic of crucial interest now. If I had to choose, it would be Runciman before Gibbon. It was a recent surprise to find Robert of Normandy's effigy in Gloucester Cathedral and to read of his 30 years' imprisonment by his brother in Cardiff Castle. He figures in Runciman. Some of Arthur Bryant is nearer home and just as interesting; the timing and quality of his *The Years of Endurance* in 1942 and *Years of Victory* in 1944 could hardly be surpassed.

Naturally one's reading of any country or period is superficial, and in pursuit of a human rather than a national appreciation, but there are so many texts now that are as enjoyable as they are interesting. There is no need to pretend to scholarships on such a scale. Bamber Gascoigne's beautifully illustrated *Treasures and Dynasties of China* and Frere's *Britannia* are good examples of history entertainingly written. Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* is heavier going, but *The Conquest of New Spain* by Bernal Diaz, an actual participant, is now available in translation in Penguin or a beautiful Folio Society edition, and makes the story real. Some of us do have the good fortune to go to Mexico, and climb pyramids and explore ruins which are the more interesting and intelligible for such background reading—as are those wonderful visiting exhibitions in this country.

Retirement gives one more time for this kind of reading, but also opportunity to look at some of the enormous archaeological wealth of our own country. Jacquetta Hawkes's *Guide to the Prehistoric and Roman Monuments in England and Wales* may not be reading matter for a single evening but, like Frere, she leads us to discover things that have been almost in our back gardens for decades, but unknown because of sheer ignorance. The Roman forts of the Saxon shore are represented by far more standing walls than I knew till Frere led me to them. How many of us know Maiden Castle exists, much less what an awesome monument it is. Mrs Bamber Gascoigne's *Castles of Britain* takes one, for example, to the evidence of England's past forcible suppression of Wales and perhaps a little better understanding of the fervour that calls for devolution, or even the tribal violence of Cardiff Arms Park. There is a chilling reminder in the Roman arena close by that it was a good deal worse in earlier times.

So there is an unending source of interest in good texts on any branch of history we choose, in whatever depth we wish. There are collaterals in some of the biographies, such as Winston Churchill's *Life of Marlborough*, provided we balance it with Trevelyan's *England under Queen Anne*. David Howarth has written one of the most interesting accounts of Waterloo from contemporary personal stories, and found much greater difficulty with Trafalgar. His account of 1066 could not be of the same kind. Harold Godwinson is one of the more interesting characters of England in the second millenium and Hope Muntz's *Golden Warrior* fascinated my children as they, too, began to read.

There is a presentation of geography with history shown at its best in Alan Moorehead's *Blue Nile, White Nile, Cooper's Creek, and The Sudden Impact*. Alastair Maclean gives us some of the toughest of modern novels from *HMS Ulysses* onwards, but also a biography of Captain Cook that seems as real as Forester's life of Nelson. Eleanor Dark's *The Timeless Land* is as much a reconstruction of terra Australis incognita as an historical novel about Bennilong. Real historians may not care for historical novels, but Robert Graves with the Claudius books, *Count Belisarius*, and *King Jesus* will do for most of us, as will much from Stuart Cloete and Zöe Oldenbourg. Two little gems from P V Glob open up a period in Scandinavia before the Viking age of which there are recent highly readable accounts.

Bengtson's *The Longships* manages to explore both the routes to Miklagard and I wondered how much else of this quality is left inaccessibly in Swedish. Perhaps the best of all these reconstructions is to be found in Naomi Mitchison's short stories—*The Delicate Fire, Black Sparta, and Barbarian Tales*. The American bicentenary produced a crop of historical novels, but none to rank with Hervey Allen's or Kenneth Roberts's series.

Around to read again

Later years have provided us with many autobiographies, of which a few like Slim's *Defeat into Victory* and, in another vein, Peter Ustinov's *Dear Me* outrank most fiction. Anne Morrow Lindbergh's little snippet *Gift From the Sea* is unique, but so also is the recent and worthy success, Edith Holden's *Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady*. Finally, the paperbacks and book clubs have made it possible to fill the house to overflowing with every kind of non-technical literature, with the Folio Society providing the most satisfying volumes. Some of the admirable serialisations of the BBC have refreshed my memories of the read and reread *Forsyte* or introduced the Palliser novels. Everyone must have his own special books, worthy to be reread many times. Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and some of his short stories; Paul Gallico's *The Boy Who Invented the Bubble Gun*, Saki's short stories, or Eric Knight's *Sam Small Flies Again* for their hilarious satire; the heroism of ordinary people and the sadness of Monsarrat's *The Cruel Sea*.

It is not merely the pleasure of reading such books once, but also of having them in the house to read again. At the end of the day, I must confess that the pleasure began 60 years ago with such meretricious stuff as *Tarzan of the Apes*. Our children did much better with Arthur Ransome, as their children do now. Even *The Little Red Engine* to be read for a small granddaughter before 7 am, has a certain appeal. For all the benefits we have from the BBC, there are times when the Corporation's products get in the way of the far more interesting printed word.

What is the long-term treatment of allergic conjunctivitis in a child when response to local antihistamines is poor?

It is not often possible in any particular case of allergic conjunctivitis to identify the allergens responsible and to remove them from the child's environment (or to remove the child to another environment) and treatment therefore remains essentially symptomatic. The condition fortunately tends to be self-limiting, and treatment can be tailored to the severity of the symptoms. It is well to educate the patient and his family in this aspect of management. Local antihistaminics are often unhelpful, and sodium cromoglycate drops should be tried. If these are not effective on their own it may still be necessary to add corticosteroid drops (soluble ones such as Predsol being better tolerated), but the cromoglycate drops will usually minimise the amount of steroid needed. Steroids should be used only when other measures fail and should be withdrawn and reintroduced as the disease remits or relapses. The serious complications of prolonged steroid treatment bear repeated emphasis—namely, glaucoma and enhancement of infections, particularly that with herpes simplex virus. Prolonged use of steroid drops should be supervised by an ophthalmologist. Allergy is believed to play a major part in the production of vernal conjunctivitis ("spring catarrh"). The above remarks also apply to treating this condition, and it can often be kept under control with cromoglycate drops. In the severer cases mucus discharge is a problem, and can be dealt with by 10% or 20% acetylcysteine drops. The frequency with which the drops are used is governed by the severity of the disease, and there will be long periods during which the child may comfortably do without any treatment. Should corneal disease such as ulceration and plaque formation occur specialised attention is essential.

Easty, D L, et al, *Clinical Allergy*, 1972, 2, 99.