

## BOOK REVIEW

WEYMOUTH, ANTHONY. *Through the Leper Squint. A Study of Leprosy from Pre-Christian Times to the Present Day.* Selwyn & Blount, London, 1938, 286 pp., price 12/6.

This book takes its title from the narrow clefts in the walls of churches through which lepers in the Middle Ages were allowed to watch the priest at the altar performing the ceremonies of the mass. In a vivid description of lepers and leprosy it is shown how the disease may have spread slowly from Egypt in all directions, going through Greece and Rome until the Roman armies had carried it across Europe and there was scarcely a country where it was not endemic. The manner in which the disease affected life in mediaeval Europe is clearly shown. The installation of hundreds of leper houses or lazarettes in England, France and other countries, and the rules and regulations framed in an effort to prevent the spread of the disease, indicate the severity of the epidemic and the anxiety of the responsible authorities of those days to control it. The methods adopted by various countries to cope with it, both in the past and today, are described in detail, and the necessity for a thorough scientific control within the British Empire is stressed.

The book is written for the general public and is not too technical. It makes fascinating reading, not only on account of the way in which leprosy is described but because of the way in which the history of the world is linked up with it. There are up-to-date maps showing its distribution and 25 other illustrations, including old prints of mediaeval scenes and recent photographs of modern lepers and leprosy institutions. A useful appendix is a chronological table of the history of leprosy from before Christ up to 1938. There are some omissions of important dates, including that of the Manila conference and the founding of the International Leprosy Association (1931). The tables of incidence throughout the world might have been brought more up to date; for example, Portugal is given as having 466 lepers in 1898, Palestine 600 in 1902, and Sumatra 1,448 in 1897. The latest year for which incidences are given is 1924, and there is also a bibliography which is not up to date. The index is good. The book will do good in promoting an intelligent interest in the subject of leprosy.

—J. W. LINDSAY