

suggestion that a more open recognition of this by the owners might often enable a promising younger employee to remain with the small firm instead of seeking other pastures in the larger units.

An interesting, instructive and thought-provoking study is this work, for which Mr. Kaplan deserves commendation. A final word needs to be said for its sponsors, the Committee for Economic Development, through its special sub-committee on the problems of the small business. The very existence of this body may be a useful hint to British industry—the more so when we read that the United States Department of Commerce, in co-operation with the Bureau of Standards, has recently established a Small Business Division, specifically for advice and the promotion of management competence. E. F. L. BRECH

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MUSEUMS AND THEIR PURPOSE

The Museum

Its History and its Tasks in Education. By Dr. Alma S. Wittlin. (International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction.) Pp. xv+297+24 plates. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1949.) 25s. net.

In a world of changing values and perspective, professional museum folk are not alone in endeavouring to adapt their outlook and methods to the new conditions now prevalent. They are aware that they have a distinct niche in any community; but they are not so sure of their distinctive message to that community. In these circumstances, many will readily turn to a book with the alluring title of "The Museum" and a sub-title "Its History and its Tasks in Education". Broadly speaking, it is felt that they will be disappointed, for the book does not contain the ready answer to museum problems. On the other hand, many will be intrigued by some statements of the author and given much food for thought and practical experiment by some of her other remarks.

At the outset, those in the museum profession will feel defiant when the author accuses directors of a lack of a well-defined purpose or policy; she assumes that they live in a drifting world, being carried willy-nilly by the force of circumstances. Admittedly, it is at times a temptation for directors and curators to have their policy dictated by the impact of incoming collections, but surely the day is long since past when such fortuitous circumstances held sway. Speaking generally, it can be categorically stated that the majority of our controlling committees and directors possess vision but lack finance. We would suggest that if Dr. Alma S. Wittlin had had the opportunity of revising her manuscript when going to press—it was written in 1945—she would have modified many of her views and incorporated much of what has been written in the *Museums Journal* and elsewhere, and discussed in Association conferences and Federation meetings throughout Great Britain.

The history of the museum in Europe is dealt with in outline, though with a wealth of references that makes this part of the book an important source of information. Museum collections are generally described from the historical or geographical point of view. Dr. Wittlin has adopted a more philosophical approach and has endeavoured to relate

them to the lives and imaginations of the men and women who assembled and treasured them. In this aim she has been eminently satisfactory.

Following the historical part, the author discusses the two main efforts made for the reform of museums. One of these commenced in the middle of the nineteenth century and came to an abrupt close in 1914; the second developed in the period between the two World Wars. With regard to the first period, Dr. Wittlin considers that hoarding was the predominant policy of museums and that it overshadowed, and indeed stultified, any attempts at the broader ideas of education. During the second period, she is of the opinion that overcrowding of exhibition material still dominated the scene, and that museums, even between 1920 and 1939, were not developing as true assets of society.

Even the most ardent supporter of museums will admit that as tools in modern education they are still in their early stages of development. But as centres of combined recreation and education they have definitely taken their place in the life of the community. Their objective value is abundantly recognized.

Although probably not agreeing with many of the conclusions reached by Dr. Wittlin in this provocative book, museum folk and others interested will be grateful to the author for her energetic researches and philosophical approach to a baffling problem. F. S. WALLIS

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APPLIED NUCLEAR PHYSICS

Atomic Energy Year Book

Edited by Dr. John Tatin. Pp. xx+237. (London: Temple Press, Ltd., 1948.) 21s. net.

THE preface to this publication states that it is intended to assist the integration of industry and science in the development of atomic energy and its associated fields by providing up-to-date information.

The almost inevitable summary of the development of nuclear physics—probably the most difficult part of the book to write—occupies the first chapter, and succeeds reasonably well in view of its limited space of twelve pages of text, apart from a mere half-dozen or so badly expressed or insufficiently explained points.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the construction and operation of piles in general. The latter chapter, the longest in the book, contains much useful information, but unfortunately it is badly arranged and presented. One gets the impression that it was written by two or even three authors who failed to co-operate sufficiently in deciding the field to be covered by each. Thus the phenomenon and consequences of delayed neutrons are dealt with twice; so also are the question of the choice of moderator materials, and the source of the neutrons which start a pile operating.

The remaining chapters deal with the broader aspects of atomic energy, and are less technical; the presentation on the whole becomes now much better. The section on "By-products of Atomic Energy" is a well-written and interesting account of tracer and allied work in many fields.

Two separate chapters are devoted to medical work; one takes the form of a number of progress