

tionate price. There is little reason to doubt his figures, and the wonder is that neither the police nor the General Medical Council seems to be able to deal with this iniquitous situation. However, if the Bill goes through, some wings may be clipped, although it is hard to see the poor old N.H.S. taking on the flood of applications which will inevitably follow; this is not the sort of operation one can put on a waiting list along with all the other jobs. It has, however, also been suggested that the need to put cases on a waiting list might not be a bad thing if it caused some candidates to have a second thought about destroying their offspring.

THE STATUS OF DOCTORS

Status is a very odd and a very subjective concept, according to Lord Snow, the famous novelist and ex-adviser to Harold Wilson, and although it is important in drawing people into a profession it is not the most important single factor. These remarks were made in a lecture by Snow to the section of general practice of the Royal Society of Medicine of London (see the Society's *Proceedings* for February), and he went on to distinguish between the status accorded by general opinion to a profession and the status of informed or academic opinion. Thus, the status of a doctor is still high in the public eye, as shown by the fact that a marriage broker in New York demands 300 dollars for getting your daughter married to a doctor, but not so high among the academics, one reason being apparently that doctors make too much money. In the Soviet Union, however, the doctor is a very low man on the totem pole, with engineers at the top and other scientists just below that. In England, scientists are greatly respected, doctors probably a little less and engineers way down the list. Thus any novelist can bring a doctor into his plot with advantage, but only rarely would he dream of including an engineer.

Lord Snow was not so much concerned with status as with the fact that neither of these respected professions of medicine and engineering were being consulted enough outside of their ordinary roles. In contrast, in the Soviet Union, Kosygin, Brezhnev and Gromyko are all engineers as well as politicians. Snow feels that in Britain (and probably also in North America) doctors have much human wisdom to contribute to government and that this is being set aside. For doctors are better than average citizens, yet they have a weakness. They are too conformist, unlike pure scientists who are mostly awful nuisances throughout their lives. As students, they will never do anything intellectually rebellious—perhaps because they are never given much chance to think. Yet although engineers are conformist also, they lack the great articulateness of doctors, as the relative numbers entering the profession of writing shows. Snow feels that the lack of speculative intelligence in medical education is robbing society of a great contribution doctors could make.

MARITAL ANAPHYLAXIS

We all know that some couples seem allergic to each other in the extended sense of the word, but it is almost unprecedented for a husband to induce anaphylaxis in his wife. The famous Paris immunologist Halpern and his colleagues record a fortunately unique case in *Immunology* (12: 247, 1967) and one in which the problem seems insoluble.

Mrs. P., aged 29, came to her marriage without previous experience of men, and on the first attempt at coitus developed a most alarming reaction with large erythematous, papular and pruritic plaques all over her body, edema of the lips, eyelids, tongue and pharynx, dyspnea, pelvic pain and loss of consciousness. The reaction reached a peak in 15-30 minutes and took 24 hours to pass off. It was repeated each time coitus occurred, and an attempt was made to identify the antigen. Testing showed that the sensitizing antigen was associated with a glycoprotein in the seminal fluid, which was not present in the serum and not in the husband's spermatozoa. The antigen was specific to man and labile at ordinary temperatures. For two years the allergic lady has been submitted to a hyposensitizing procedure by injections of total human seminal fluid to try to induce blocking antibodies, but without effect. She still gets systemic reactions to the injections and still has symptoms on intercourse (surely a case of bravery beyond the call of duty). Halpern remarks that the unique feature of the case is that it represents a spontaneous hypersensitivity to a constituent of human origin.

MARTINDALE

Almost anybody who cares about the prescribing of drugs in Britain must at some time or another have bought a copy of that pocket-sized gem, Martindale's *Extra Pharmacopoeia*. It began in 1883 when William Martindale, who owned a pharmacy in the West End of London, produced a slim volume of 300 pages containing a précis of all that was then known about the prescribing, composition, pharmacology and analysis of drug preparations. As time went on, *Martindale* split into two volumes, of which most doctors bought only the first, since it contained all they needed to know. As time went on, also, the volume began to have an old-fashioned look and to contain a lot of information that was out of date or superfluous to any but a medical historian. All that has changed.

In March of this year, a new, rejuvenated and in this writer's opinion absolutely unique and indispensable 25th edition appeared, in a larger format of 1800 pages within one volume. At a price of seven pounds and ten shillings it represents real value for money; it is also a great time-waster, for a peep into its pages in search of one item of information is likely to beguile the reader into a prolonged consultation. Only a doctor whose therapeutic soul has shrivelled within him could resist these pages with their mass of information inter-