

SOCIAL WORK—Essays on the Meeting-ground of Doctor and Social Worker. By Richard C. Cabot, M.D. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1919. Pp. xxvii. plus 188. \$1.50 net.

Diagnosis and treatment are the two essential complementary phases of all effective social work just as they are of all worthwhile medical work. Diagnosis is of little value, especially to the patient, unless it is followed by treatment. Treatment is only accidentally successful unless it is based upon correct diagnosis. Medical and social ills are frequently so closely knit together that both medical and social treatment are essential to the cure of those ills. Back of such treatment there must be correct social as well as correct medical diagnosis.

This is the platform on which Dr. Cabot bases his analysis of the social worker's task as a social diagnostician or a social therapist. Her role is that of an assistant to the physician. Through her he extends the range of his observations into the environment of his patient; likewise through her his treatment reaches more of the causes of the patient's malady.

Dr. Cabot's discussion of the equipment of the medical social worker is a timely contribution to a better understanding of a vexed question. Medical social service has reached that stage in its development at which it needs not only a clear formulation of its scope and function, but the realization as well that it is or must be a profession with a task distinct, calling for adequate and specialized professional training, and not an occupation open to any person possessed alone of normal intelligence and a desire to serve, valuable as those qualifications may be.

One point made by Dr. Cabot is his discussion of history-taking is so essential for successful social work, and is so frequently lost sight of by social workers that it seems worthy of special comment. He says that there are two ways of looking at the misfortunes of an individual. One is the right point of view, the "historic"; and the other is the wrong way, the "catastrophic" or accidental point of view. If the social worker is to make a correct social diagnosis she must view the maladjustments, she is studying, not as isolated conditions or events, but rather as having causes and consequences. In like manner, social treatment worth while must be curative and corrective rather than palliative. That this is almost always contrary to the beliefs and wishes of the patient makes the social worker's task that much the harder and her success that much the better earned.