

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS : BOEKRESENSIES

### MODERN TRENDS IN ENDOCRINOLOGY

*Modern Trends in Endocrinology.* Edited by H. Gardiner-Hill, M.D., F.R.C.P. Pp. ix + 298 + (13). 15 Figures. 73s. + 1s 7d. London: Butterworth & Co. (Publishers) Ltd. South African Office: Butterworth & Co. (Africa) Ltd., P.O. Box 792, Durban. 1958.

This 'Modern trends' series has achieved considerable popularity and there are at least 15 other volumes, each of which deals with a particular aspect of medicine. The advantages of this type of publication is that the field which can be covered is wide and there is no obligation on the editor to aim at covering the whole subject. In fact, there is no apparent limit to the number of series of each branch of medicine which can be published as a number of second series (and even a third series) testifies.

This volume covers a limited field of endocrinology. Some of the chapters are very readable reviews, written in a style suitable for one who has no special knowledge of endocrinology. The thyroid gland, for example, receives considerable attention and the chapters are written in an eminently readable and concise manner. So too are the sections on steroid therapy in the treatment of rheumatic disorders, the chapter on adrenal function tests as well as that on carcinoid tumours and serotonin. Some of the other sections are not as easy to understand and will be of greater interest to the endocrinologist rather than to the general physician. But the editor has collected a very powerful team of workers each of whom

is a specialist in his own field, and they have all written authoritative reviews of their own special topic. Often they have given their own views even if these were not in full agreement with the rest of the literature. With the speed of endocrinological advance being what it is today, it is not surprising that there is not unanimity of opinion in all fields. Frank discussion and the airing of differences can thus only do good. For these reasons this new member of a rapidly expanding family is ensured of a warm welcome and the second series is awaited with considerable interest.

C.M.

### DISORDERS OF AGING

*The Neurologic and Psychiatric Aspects of the Disorders of Aging.* Proceedings of the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease, December 9 and 10, 1955, New York, N.Y. Volume XXXV. Editors: J. E. Moore, M.D., H. H. Merritt, M.D. and R. J. Masselink, M.D. Pp. ix+307. 79 Illustrations. 17 Tables. 68s. London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox Ltd. 1956.

This book provides an authoritative statement on present-day ideas regarding neurological and psychological deviations of senescence and improved methods of research, through the medium of essays, discussions, questions and replies.

The material is predominantly factual, descriptive and almost devoid of speculation, nevertheless the fear that such a production would be pedantic and uninteresting is soon dispelled by the

lucid language, jargon-free style and stimulating interjections of the lecturers and listeners.

The need for research is stressed by the concept of life as consisting of a brief mentally immature youth and a long steadily deteriorating middle age, senescence and senility.

Trauma, infection, neoplasm and metabolic disturbances compete and cooperate to disable man in his youth and if he reaches 'The Top of Hill Seventy' unscathed, his survival is challenged by degenerative diseases. Nevertheless despondency is unjustified, for a great variety of means to retard and combat the ravages of old age are available, and further momentous discoveries seem according to the book just round the corner.

This is an exceptionally interesting and instructive book.

I.M.H.

### PAINLESS CHILDBIRTH

*Psychoprophylactic Preparation for Painless Childbirth.* By Isidore Bonstein, M.D. Pp. 143. 14 Figures. 12s. 6d. London: William Heinemann Medical Books Ltd. 1958.

Dr. Bonstein has dedicated this short treatise to Dr. Lamaze of Paris 'who revealed to thousands of women a new and exhilarating approach to motherhood'. This 'psychoprophylactic' approach,

based on Pavlov's famous conditioned reflex, results in the physical and psychical education of the pregnant woman during the last weeks of pregnancy.

To maintain, however, that this preparation of the pregnant woman is 'absolutely different from all other methods practised, with a view to making confinements painless', is hardly accurate if one has studied Grantly Dick Read. The continuous administration of oxygen during the second half of labour and delivery appears to be the only difference. Besides the simple explanation of the psychophysiology of the brain and pain in childbirth, the 'psychoprophylactic' preparation of the patient is briefly discussed in 8 short lectures dealing mainly with respiratory muscular relaxation, the mechanism of labour, and the functions of the brain. This makes for easy reading particularly for the busy practitioner and the lay person.

However, one cannot agree with such statements as 'the deeply engaged head is an obstetrical complication', or 'anterior or lateral displacements of the uterus are abnormal', and a 'good bandage' would easily correct this malposition.

However these are not very serious faults and one can recommend this simply written and easily readable manuscript to those interested in 'painless childbirth'.

L.R.