

BOEKBESPREKINGS : BOOK REVIEWS

ESSAYS ON ANAESTHESIA

Essays on the First Hundred Years of Anaesthesia. Vol. I.
By W. Stanley Sykes, M.B.E., M.B., B.Chir. (Cantab.), D.A.
Pp. 171. 39 plates. 30s. plus 1s. 7d. postage abroad.
Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. 1960.

In the years between 1930 and 1940 the name of W. Stanley Sykes was known to all admirers of detective fiction, but the war relegated this author to a German P.O.W. camp and his best-selling 'whodunit' to obscurity. Phoenix-like, Dr. Sykes

has thrown off the sackcloth and ashes which are considered the traditional trappings of anaesthetists, and has burst forth in a new guise.

Everyone who reads and is entertained by these essays will thank the Muses that more is to follow, and will agree with the author's observation that learning from our own mistakes is too slow a process, and that the value of history lies in the fact that by it we learn from the mistakes of others.

Dr. Sykes set out originally to compile an encyclopaedia of

all anaesthetic apparatus that had ever been offered to discerning purchasers. His researches fortunately diverted him, particularly into those early numbers of the *Lancet* published when it was edited by its founder Thomas Wakley, and this delightful collection is the result.

The dilemma facing the medical attendants of Queen Victoria at the birth of Prince Leopold, Squire Waterton's ride on a crocodile in search of curare, James Young Simpson's statistical anticipation of the work of Pasteur and Lister, and the journalistic sparrings between Syme, of Edinburgh, and Snow, of London, are some of the jewels refurbished by Dr. Sykes. Perhaps the brightest gem is Dr. Edward Lawrie's contention that cardiac arrest in chloroform anaesthesia is a protective reflex designed to prevent too much chloroform reaching the brain, and that if such patients are not subjected to meddling attempts at resuscitation their lives will be saved.

The author's style and presentation make this an ideal bedside book for members of the profession, and most of them will be on tenterhooks for the publication of further volumes.
C.S.J.

MEDICAL IDEAS

Centaur: Essays on the History of Medical Ideas. By Félix Martí-Ibáñez, M.D. Pp. xvii + 716, \$6.00. New York: MD Publications Inc. 1959.

Here is a collection of some 66 essays which range through the centuries and the world to make pleasurable and thought-provoking reading.

The author is a well-known medical historian and he brings to his writings a wealth of knowledge, philosophy and humanity. There will be few who will not appreciate the quiet enjoyment which these essays will give.
A.H.T.

AN ASPECT OF THE PEST SITUATION

Consequences of Disturbance: The Pest Situation Examined. By Alan Mozley, D.Sc., Ph.D., F.R.S.E. Pp. x + 61. 9s. net. London: H. K. Lewis & Co. Ltd. 1960.

This small publication of just over 60 pages is a philosophical treatise on the effects of 'disturbances' by humans of virgin areas and the ecological change affecting plant and animal life that results.

The author, who spent much of his life in the study of molluscs—both disease-transmitting and others—uses these pests as examples for making his points. Much repetition unfortunately occurs and many of the chapters tend to be disjointed and do not hang together in the manner expected of a treatise of this nature. The author could well have made his case in half the space he has taken.

The book is well produced and the paper is of first-class quality.
E.D.C.

HUMAN PROTOZOOLOGY AND HELMINTHOLOGY

A Short Synopsis of Human Protozoology and Helminthology. By L. R. S. MacFarlane, O.B.E., M.D., M.A., D.P.H., Brigadier. Pp. 251 + vii. 61 figures. 35s. net + 1s. 5d. postage abroad. Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. 1960.

This short text of some 250 pages contains only the bare essential details of the subject it purports to cover. As the author states, much of the material is a condensation from the larger work of Craig and Faust, supplemented by the author's own experience. Although the volume is short, a feature which often results in a rather dull style of presentation, there is a considerable amount of useful information. Designed primarily for students taking the Diploma of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, the book should prove admirable for this purpose. However, the worker in tropical and subtropical regions who has to deal with problems concerned with any of the parasites discussed will require fuller information.

References to more detailed sources of information and an expansion of the appendix to include techniques other than staining methods would be of assistance.
K.C.W.

TOOLS OF BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Tools of Biological Research. Edited by H. J. B. Atkins, D.M., M.Ch. (Oxf.), F.R.C.S. (Eng.) (Hon.), F.A.C.S. Pp. xvi + 183. 113 text-figures and plates (4 in colour). 37s. 6d. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications Ltd. 1959.

A collection of 10 papers which were presented at a symposium of researchers (mainly surgical) at Guy's Hospital, London, this book familiarizes one in a general way with some of the more widely used tools of research provided by the latest developments in optics, electronics and radiochemistry.

The following tools are discussed: Statistical experimentation; the use of flame photometry (other than for the simple estimation of sodium and potassium in body fluids); electromanometry to amplify and record rapidly changing pressures with accuracy; tissue transplantation; tissue culture, both cellular and organic; the electron microscope and its high resolution powers; the weighing of cells with a microscope; the principles and applications of electrophoresis; image intensification in X-ray technology; mass spectrometry for automatic gas analysis.

For the best results in research it is necessary to have some knowledge of all the tools available, and this book, illustrated with many diagrams and plates, introduces the researcher or the prospective researcher to the most widely applicable of these. Although the book is primarily concerned with the use of these tools in biological research, the reader can learn much about them in their application in other fields.
C.N.B.