

BOEKBESPREKINGS : BOOK REVIEWS

REFLEXES

The Discovery of Reflexes. By E. G. T. Liddell, D.M., F.R.S. Pp. 174. 23 illustrations. English price: R3.00. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960. South African agents: Oxford University Press, P.O. Box 1141, Cape Town.

This book is, in effect, a tribute to the life and work of Charles Sherrington, a task for which the author is particularly fitted by reason of his own distinction as a neurophysiologist and as one of Sherrington's distinguished pupils.

It is a happy fact that many of those who worked with Sherrington are able to write extremely well, almost as though they had acquired in their contacts with him some of his own great talent in this sphere. Professor Liddell tells a fascinating story of the history of the knowledge of the nerve cell from the time in 1665 when Robert Hooke gave the earliest description. He follows over the years, with the improvement in the microscope and in the techniques of preparing specimens, the development of more modern concepts with the last word yet far from being said. Similarly, with nerve conduction and the ideas of the electrical phenomena of nerves—the early theories and experiments, and so to 1879, the year when Sherrington, a young student of 21, entered Cambridge and began to work on reflex action of the nervous system culminating in the classic 'Integrative action of the nervous system' published in 1906.

Let me hasten to reassure those who may think this a dull historical work; the author is a brilliant teller of a fascinating story, and once started it is a book that everyone will read avidly to the last page. To all interested in neurophysiology this is a classic to buy and cherish; for the everyday doctor, and especially for those who ever venture into print, it is an example of how to write well about science.

S.B.

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Methods in Medical Research. Vol. 8. Edited by H. D. Bruner. Pp. xiv+368. 39 figures. \$9.75. Chicago: Year Book Publishers, Inc. 1960.

This volume maintains the same high standard of its predecessors and is of particular interest to research workers.

The present number is concerned with 3 main subjects: (1) The life history of the erythrocyte, (2) the measurement of responses of involuntary muscle, and (3) peripheral-blood-flow measurement.

The first section commences with a discussion of the examination of the bone marrow followed by an account of bone-marrow culture and the difficulties of interpretation. The reticulocyte count has the merit of simplicity, but observations show it may be unreliable, since increases in reticulocytes need not necessarily be accompanied by increases in peripheral red-cell counts nor in the number of nucleated red cells in the marrow. Radio-iron methods are fully described and the underlying assumptions in using Fe^{59} for determining iron turnover have been analysed. Another method of determining bound iron and unsaturated iron-binding capacity of plasma is reported by Schade. Methods of measuring red-cell volume (P^{32} , Cr^{51} , Fe^{59}) are considered and the difference between red-cell volume determined by isotope-tagging methods as opposed to carbon monoxide, is suggested by Root and Allen. Of the methods employed for studying the life span of the red cell, the best probably embodies the use of N^{15} - or C^{14} -labelled glycine but other methods are considered. The metabolism and methods of estimation of urobilinogen are fully described, and although urobilinogen excretion is an imperfect index of red-cell destruction, it still plays a useful rôle in clinical medicine.

The second section on measurement of responses of involuntary

muscle contains a useful account of the investigation of gastro-intestinal motility.

The third section has a very complete discussion of peripheral-blood-flow measurement including measurement of the hepatic, coronary, and renal blood flow (blood-tissue exchange methods). Electro-mechanical methods including venous occlusion plethysmography, calorimetry, the use of Bristle and the Square-wave electro-magnetic flowmeters, are considered in detail.

For workers in these fields, this book may be strongly recommended. L.E.

YEAR BOOK OF OPHTHALMOLOGY

The Year Book of Ophthalmology, 1959 - 1960. Edited by William F. Hughes, M.D. Pp. 406. 95 figures. \$8.00. Chicago: Year Book Publishers, Inc. 1960.

After ten years' editorship of the Ophthalmology Year Book series, Derrick Vail has been succeeded by William F. Hughes. The present volume maintains the high standard set by its predecessors and is assured of many more years of support.

The introductory special article on clinical electroretinography is of particular significance in the light of the recent visit of Prof. Jules Francois to this country. There follows, under appropriate chapters, a selection of the best articles appearing in world literature over the previous twelve months. These articles are adequately summarized, are of fair length and accompanied, as before, by critical editorial comment, which is particularly required when contrasting views are presented, such as the mechanical and neurovascular theories of the aetiology of glaucoma.

This book continues to be the best summary of the year's literature. Previous readers of the Year Book will undoubtedly add this volume to their libraries, and new readers can only derive benefit and instruction from introduction to it. L.S.

CANCER

A Clinical Prospect of the Cancer Problem. Introductory Volume. Edited by D. W. Smithers, M.D., F.R.C.P., F.F.R. Pp. xv+232. Illustrated. R3.75+21c postage abroad. Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd.

This introductory survey to a series of monographs on 'Neoplastic disease at various sites', written by the general editor, is produced to form a philosophic background for the succeeding volumes.

While intentionally speculative and provocative, it is refreshingly stimulating. The reader is led away from old familiar paths of conventional approach, from the masses and the 'cancer cells' that tend to constitute our more habitual thought-forms, to alterations in pattern, disorganized behaviour and to the concept that 'cancer is a word for a selection of extreme behaviour patterns within the class of tissue malformations being normally contained within the subdivision tumours'.

The discussions on the natural history of neoplasia, the theories of causation, and the influences of hormones and other relevant topics add very considerably to the general value of this production.

This outstanding contribution is worthy of serious study by all. It augurs well for the whole series. J.M.G.

GYNAECOLOGY

Text-book of Gynaecology. 5th edition. By J. H. Peel, M.A., B.M., B.Ch. (Oxon.), F.R.C.S., F.R.C.O.G. Pp. 491+xv. 209 figures. R3.00 net. London: William Heinemann Medical Books Ltd. 1960.

The fifth edition of this well-known textbook is fully up to the standard of its predecessors. John Peel's textbook is widely used by undergraduate students both in this country and overseas, and admirably suits the purpose. The recent developments in gynaecology are included in this new edition; as reflected by general revision throughout and the incorporation of a new chapter on intersex.

While the standard throughout is high, particularly good chapters are those dealing with amenorrhoea, menorrhagia, gynaecological endocrinology, and general treatment in gynaecology.

Although the author wrote the book primarily for undergraduate students, the basic facts and recent advances are so well handled that it can confidently be recommended to general practitioners. H.M.

NEOPLASTIC DISEASE OF BONE

Neoplasms of Bone and Related Conditions. 2nd edition. By Bradley L. Coley, M.D. Pp. xv+863. 649 illustrations and 31 tables. \$30.00. New York: Paul B. Hoeber, Inc. 1960.

This is a beautifully produced, but rather heavy and expensive book of reference on tumours of bone. It is very clearly set out and easy to read. The bibliography is rather incomplete for such a specialized work.

The wisdom of including sections on non-tumorous skeletal conditions, of which there are so many, must be doubted. Scant justice is done to them in the space allowed. Why include rickets, for instance, and dismiss it in three lines? The occasional confusion of scurvy with osteogenic sarcoma is emphasized, but the much more difficult diagnostic problem which may be produced by haemophilia is not mentioned. It is surprising to find that the frequently occurring problem of the diagnosis of simple osteoporosis from the diffuse skeletal rarefaction of some cases of myelomatosis and carcinomatosis is not considered.

On the whole, the chemical and radiological features of the various conditions are clearly and fully presented, with many valuable practical suggestions regarding the management. The book should prove of great value as a textbook for those studying for higher degrees in medicine, surgery, radiology and perhaps even pathology. It will be very useful as a reference book to those of us who deal with any aspect of bone disease. W.P.U.J.

CHIRURGIE EN BEJAARDE PERSONE

Management of the Aged Surgical Patient. By Sidney E. Ziffren, M.D. With chapters on *Anesthesia* by Stuart C. Cullen, M.D. and *Urology* by Rubin H. Flocks, M.D. and a discussion of *The Cardiac and Diabetic Patient Facing Emergency Operation* by Raymond F. Sheets, M.D. Pp. 219. 30 figures. \$7.50 Chicago: The Year Book Publishers, Inc. 1960.

Na 'n oorsig van die algemene probleme van die bejaarde pasiënt wat chirurgiese behandeling nodig het, gaan die skrywer oor tot meer spesifieke oorwegings van die voorbereiding van dié soort pasiënte vir operasie—met nadruk op die belang van korreksie van bloedarmoede en elektrolitiese sturings.

Die operasie, na-operatiewe tydperk, en die komplikasies word in die algemeen bespreek, asook die akute buiktoestande by oumense. Dan volg daar 'n hoofstuk oor 'n verskeidenheid van toestande, insluitende die arteriosklerotiese bloedsiektes.

In 'n hoofstuk oor die probleme van die diabetiese pasiënt en die pasiënt met hartversaking wat noodoperasies moet ondergaan, deur mede-skrywer R. F. Sheets, word 'n oorsig gegee oor die spesiale voorsorgmaatreëls wat hier geneem moet word. In 'n hoofstuk oor narkose deur S. C. Cullen word hierdie belangrike onderwerp, tesame met die voorbereiding en naoperatiewe sorg, uit die narkose-ooppunt bespreek.

In 'n hoofstuk oor traumatiese letsels word die aandag meestal gewy aan ortopediese probleme, en ten slotte bespreek R. H. Flocks die spesiale urologiese probleme by ou pasiënte.

Alhoewel hierdie 'n betreklike beknopte samevatting van die onderwerp is, dien dit nogtans as 'n baie waardevolle leidraad by die oorweging van die chirurgiese behandeling van die bejaarde pasiënt, en die skrywer sluit 'n lang lys van verwysings na oorspronklike publikasies in waarna die leser kan verwys vir meer informasie oor besondere aspekte van die onderwerp. J.J.W.v.Z.

GYNAECOLOGY

Synopsis of Gynecology. 5th Edition. By R. J. Crossen, M.D., D. W. Beacham, M.D. and W. D. Beacham, M.D. Pp. 340. 106 illustrations. South African price: R5.52. St. Louis: C. V. Mosby Co. 1960.

Another useful little book of the American 'synopsis' series; it is attractively bound and produced.

The content is presented in a practical way, the introductory chapters being concerned with anatomy and physiology, and gynaecological examination and diagnosis. The succeeding chapters follow in anatomical sequence.

The volume should be of practical value and should prove useful to students and general practitioners for rapid reference. P.A.T.