

Book reviews

A companion to medical studies—in three volumes.

Volume I, Anatomy, biochemistry, physiology and related studies. Editors-in-chief R. PASSMORE AND J. S. ROBSON. Oxford and Edinburgh. Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1968. Pp. lii+1091. Price, limp cover £4 15s. 0d. Cloth cover £6 6s. 0d.

This is the first volume of a set of three. The second volume on general pathology and pharmacology is expected in August 1969 and the third on Medicine, surgery, obstetrics, therapeutics and social medicine in April 1970.

It is the product of the Edinburgh Medical School and it is the objective that the student will find more than enough in these three volumes to pass the examinations throughout his course. In the book an attempt has been made to break down departmental barriers in each subject in order to avoid unnecessary repetition. This whole concept is exciting but to the reviewer the book does not live up to the prospects. In an attempt to reduce the content of the subjects to a manageable volume, either the subject material has to be condensed or that which seems irrelevant to modern concepts of medical education has to be pruned. The material in many chapters of this volume seems to have been condensed so much that these become virtually unreadable, whilst matter that seems irrelevant remains. Due to this, the volume will have little place on the general practitioner's bookshelf. This might have been expected as it is aimed at undergraduate students but the basic concept is such an exciting one, that one hopes that the second and third volumes, particularly the latter, will achieve more adequately the objectives outlined by the editors.

Society without the father. ALEXANDER MITSCHERLICH, M.D. Translated from the German by ERIC MOSBACHER. First English edition. London. Tavistock Publications Ltd. 1969. Pp. xi+329. Price £3 0s. 0d.

Despite the brilliant technical achievements of our civilization, there is a growing sense that it may be in danger of breakdown. This may be because Man's emotional development has lagged behind his intellectual triumphs. This book is a contribution to understanding of why we are in danger, important to all whose concern it is to avoid disaster. Professor Mitscherlich is a distinguished psychoanalyst, who uses his analytic knowledge, derived from clinical experience, to put his finger on some of the sources of our difficulties.

A rough and inadequate summary of his argu-

ment is that we are coming to the end of a paternalistic society, where authority is imposed from above, and have to learn to adjust to a society of siblings. In analytic terms, instead of subjecting ourselves to the demands of a severe super ego, or, at the other extreme, abjuring responsibility and letting the id run riot, we need to develop our ego, our sense of reality. This involves maturing, giving up superstition and intolerance, and questioning all rules. In Brecht's words, "The custom of thinking afresh in every new situation."

If we are to do this, we must begin with the individual, and especially with the child. Mitscherlich indicates that education in human self-respect is the key to progress, and we need both to love and to respect our children. It is interesting that a wise scientist from a different discipline, Konrad Lorenz, in his book *On aggression* writes "A relation of trust and respect between two generations must exist in order to make a tradition of values possible."

This well-translated book is densely written; that is, every sentence demands and deserves critical thought. In this sense it is difficult, but one cannot say difficult things in easy ways. Nevertheless it is profound and rewarding, and within the intellectual grasp of an intelligent layman. This is a constructive book that gives a glimpse of hope to those who see only decay and confusion around, and the more who read it the greater the hope.

Postgraduate medicine. I. J. T. DAVIES, M.B., M.R.C.P. London. Lloyd-Luke (Medical Books) Ltd. 1969. Pp. viii+324. Price £3 0s. 0d.

Dr Davies is senior registrar to The United Cardiff Hospitals, and he is to be congratulated on producing this small textbook of advanced orthodox medicine for candidates seeking a higher diploma. This is not a cramming text, and it will be enjoyed by those many general practitioners who feel the urge for what Sir William Osler called their 'quinquennial brain-dusting'. Not least, it may be helpful to those among their number who are nerving themselves to appear in an unaccustomed rôle as examiners for the membership of The Royal College of General Practitioners.

The author shows a wise modesty in asking in his preface for suggestions from his readers, and as it is to be hoped that the future will see many editions of this book, it should be said at once that the text is deficient in failing to cover important aspects of the genetic components of human illness. To give a single example, the highly complex

heritable factors that influence the association of hyperkeratosis of the palms and soles with enhanced liability, in certain families only, to the development of cancer of the oesophagus, is misleading in its condensation. The two references, only one of which appears in the index, state that "Tylosis palmaris or hyperkeratosis of the palms occurs in carcinoma of the oesophagus." The second describes tylosis palmaris as "thickening of the skin of the palms seen in carcinoma of the oesophagus." Both statements need revision if they are not seriously to mislead the reader.

There is no mention of malaria, and the blood diseases need a satisfactory section in a book of this type. The strongest chapters are on the respiratory system and on cardiology, and the section on neurology has excellent diagrams. The diseases of the thyroid are discussed in a most helpful chapter. Dr Davies translates the Greek words in the medical terminology, and in footnotes gives us the life-span and locations of workers whose names have, often unwisely, been substituted for descriptions of diseases. We learn on page 90 that Behçet's disease was described by "Hulusi Behçet (1889-1948) a Turkish dermatologist.", but we have to turn to another book to learn more.

Many will profit from reading this book, and enjoy the stimulus of accepting Dr Davies' invitation to write to him making suggestions of constructive criticism for its future.

Chemotherapy of chronic bronchitis and allied disorders. J. ROBERT MAY, M.D., F.C.Path.
London. The English Universities Press Ltd.
1968. Pp. x+115. Price 35s. 0d.

Because chronic bronchitis is so common in this country, the treatment of the acute exacerbations which punctuate its course is one of the largest items in the workload of general practitioners during the winter months. The economic implications of this have not been lost upon the pharmaceutical industry. General practitioners are the target of a continuing barrage of claims made for this or that company's antibiotic. Each is supposed to have some special merit, and this is emphasized with a varying degree of subtle or disingenuous persuasion. We are led to believe that 'White-mycin' achieves higher and more rapid serum levels than any other broad-spectrum antibiotic. The overriding advantage of 'Dormycin', on the other hand, is that it has been reported to cause far fewer side-effects. Since the latter are allegedly due to monilial super-infection, 'Churchmycin' includes (at no extra cost) an anti-fungal agent. And, lest the general practitioner should be deterred from prescribing the most expensive antibiotic of them all 'alpha-3-Blindmycin', it is pointed out that one clinical trial (published in a rather obscure journal) showed such overwhelming advantages in the speed of recovery that the tax-payer would

actually benefit if it were prescribed more widely.

The confusion felt by many general practitioners in the face of all these conflicting claims of the pharmaceutical companies would be largely dispelled by reading this book. It presents an account of the present state of knowledge of the part which bacterial infection plays in chronic bronchitis. Based on the long experience of the author in the field of fundamental bacteriology and its clinical applications, the book is intended to be a guide to those doctors who are most concerned with the practical problems of the use of antibacterial drugs for the treatment of chronic bronchitis. In the reviewer's opinion, it succeeds in giving a balanced view of the whole subject. As the author points out, whereas in some diseases the impact of antibiotics has been a dramatic one, in chronic bronchitis the success of antibiotics is much less self-evident. Some of the reasons for their shortcomings in chronic bronchitis becomes clearer when one reads of the bacteriological problems involved and the limitations of all antibiotics in surmounting these. Since chronic bronchitis is pre-eminent among the serious diseases for whose management the general practitioner has a special responsibility, this book deserves to be widely read by all those in general practice.

Lecture notes on general surgery. Second edition.
H. ELLIS, D.M., M.Ch., F.R.C.S., and R. Y. CALNE, M.S., F.R.C.S. Oxford. Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1968. Pp. 395.
Price £2 2s. 0d.

The fact that a second edition of this most useful book has been called for within three years of its first appearance is an indication of the extent to which its usefulness has been recognized.

The new edition has been carefully revised, and several new diagrams have been added, notably in the chapter on the Chest and Lungs. A short additional section on the general principles of transplantation surgery has been added. In spite of these changes only 13 pages have been added, and the price—surely almost an economic miracle—remains the same.

For those who did not see the earlier edition, the book is based on notes of lectures given by the authors to final-year students, and provides an excellent revision course for a student just before the examinations. It will confirm him in what he already knows, and remind him of what he has forgotten.

I have a medical student son, and I am keeping this book for him. What more can I say than that.