

principles underlying a particular treatment, the reader is not overwhelmed by controversial minutiae. The advice on treatment is often dogmatic but this, in the circumstances, may be regarded as an asset.

With the all-round high standard of authorship it is difficult to single out particular contributions but "Agricultural Pesticides" by E. F. Edson contains much material not yet generally available and "Respiratory Paralysis" by W. Ritchie Russell gives a detailed and most useful account of the first-aid management, and transport of cases of bulbar poliomyelitis—a matter of vital importance.

The general layout and printing are attractive and there is an adequate index. It is reasonably priced and should be a valuable addition to any general practitioner's library.

**Die Gezielte Diagnostik in der Praxis.** Grundlayen and Krankheitsaufigkeit. DR ROBERT N. BRAUN. Foreword by Univ. Prof. Dr Hans Schulten. Stuttgart 1957. pp. 196. Price DM 18.80.

The knowledge of the frequency of diseases among the population is of utmost importance to almost everybody who is connected with medicine. The source for this knowledge can only be general practice. Very little was done in this field until about twenty years ago, since when an ever increasing number of practitioners have begun to survey statistically their practices. Braun's Statistical Diagnostic is the latest publication in this line of research.

In the first part of the book he postulates a number of points as conditions for validity and comparison of morbidity statistics. The greatest difficulty is a uniform classification by diagnoses: he sets out a system of his own to overcome this obstacle. In the second part, he discusses critically the existing literature. The third and main part contains the statistical analysis of the material of his general practice during five years among an industrial population, four years among a country population and during two years among the better classes of a town.

All "Reasons for consultation", are classified according to his diagnostic system under 194 main headings (diagnostic groups) and under 312 sub-headings. Each year of his practice is shown separately in absolute figures and as per thousand.

The survey shows that a comparatively small number of diagnostic groups makes up the greatest part of a general practice, and that these same groups are remarkably constant in frequency in different sections of a population and, by comparison with other surveys, also within wide geographical boundaries (West Europe and U.K.).

Finally, the author formulates what he calls the biological law of distribution of disease, the gist of which is that any group of people who live under similar conditions will react in a similar way to any factor relevant to health.

General experience confirms Braun's statement that a comparatively small number of complaints claim in ever recurrent repetition the main share of our activity in general practice. His table shows also that the same conditions maintain the same numerical importance in his industrial and country practice. He does not convince one that his diagnostic classification makes his statistics more valid or comparable than any other. His classification is as much the product of his personal approach and inclinations as that of any other author. Comparing Braun's industrial figures with those of J. Fry's latest review of five years of a suburban general practice we find their respective figures of c.s. otitis media 150 (Fry) and 21 (Braun), of peptic ulcer 30 and 6.8, of hypertonia 65 and 10.8; but for diabetes 5 and 3. This shows that the only diagnostic label to bear comparison is the one which is established on the basis of absolute figures (blood-sugar estimation); all the others show too wide a discrepancy to be explained by racial, occupational or climatic differences. I not only agree with Fry's opinion that "disease groups are useful in a broad fashion", I would narrow its intentional sense even more and opine that *only* the study of one or a few specific, well-defined entities can produce valid and comparable results.

I must express my extreme admiration for the magnitude and thoroughness of the author's work. The tables are well conceived and executed. The index gives 451 references and covers European, American, Canadian and British literature.

#### REFERENCE

Fry, J. Five Years of General Practice., *Brit. med. J.*, 1957, 2, 1453.

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*Livingstone of Edinburgh.* The January list of books published by E. & S. Livingstone Ltd is an impressive catalogue. An interesting note inside the front cover gives a short history of the rise of the firm since it was founded in 1863 by Edward Livingstone who was joined by his brother in 1865. The association of R. L. Stevenson with the firm in an abortive effort to run a student magazine is recalled—"Poor yellow sheet, that looked so hopefully in the Livingstone's window . . . I told myself that the time was not yet ripe, nor the man ready, having fallen back in one day from the printed author to the manuscript student". Success—even to the greatest—does not come all at once.

Livingstone Ltd, 15, 16, 17 Teviot Place, Edinburgh, will be pleased to send a copy of their list to anyone interested.