

Book reviews

Scientific and clinical medicine of today for practitioners and students. First edition. G. E. BEAUMONT, M.A., D.M., F.R.C.P. London. Lloyd-Luke (Medical Books) Ltd. 1968. Pp. 182. Price 20s. 0d.

This small book will give pleasure and instruction to students of all age groups in every branch of medicine. It enables us to follow the thought processes of a great physician, who has written previous textbooks that, by their merits, have passed through many editions. In his full maturity Dr Beaumont enables us to see him at work, and share in his personal and professional relationships with junior hospital staff, with general practitioners, and with his consultant colleagues. We admire his enthusiasm to learn and to observe, as well as his great gift for teaching others. All his clinical descriptions are backed by a deep knowledge of patients as well as of their diseases.

The book opens with two excellent, down to earth, chapters on chromosome abnormalities and other genetic problems affecting illness. There is a good discussion of the autoimmune diseases and of the role of the thymus and lymphoid tissues in maintaining homeostasis in human defences against the environment. The virus induced diseases, and those caused by fungi, form interesting sections, which include a remarkable description of a patient with pulmonary actinomycosis. A chapter on The Art of Medicine is very fine indeed. Here a number of fascinating clinical problems are described in detail. Dr Beaumont is always modest, ready to accept as well as to give help in reaching an accurate diagnosis in a difficult case. A warm loyalty to colleagues is felt, that must have won the respect of house physicians and general practitioners on many occasions. The chapter on Therapeutics, as befits a disciple of Sir William Osler, is the weakest in the book; but with such a clinician at the bedside, the forces of nature and the routines of conventional treatment, will produce the happiest possible results.

This well-printed little book, bound in shiny-white paper, will slip easily into the pocket of a white coat or of a dressing-gown, and many who buy it will find that some of its clinical wisdom rubs off on to the reader, as it has done over the years on to many colleagues, young and not so young.

A single example must suffice from the chapter on Idle Thoughts:

'They should not only Medicine read who would the Art of Medicine know.'

Investigations in clinical medicine. G. R. BURSTON, M.B., Ch.B., M.R.C.P. London. Lloyd-Luke (Medical Books) Ltd. 1968. Pp. 165. Price 25s. 0d.

This short guide is written primarily for the final-year medical student and the recently-qualified doctor. It is, however, a handy little book for any practising doctor to keep as a ready and rapid reference. In these days when there is a tendency to over-investigate patients, a feature of this book which will be much appreciated by the general practitioner is the restraint employed in choosing those which should usefully be done. The work begins with a list of normals. This is always useful and it is handy to have these at the beginning. There is no index but the symptoms and syndromes considered are treated alphabetically by chapters.

Diagnostic methods. Edited by JOHN W. MILLS, M.B., M.R.C.P., D.M.R.D. London. Butterworths. 1968. Pp. vii+176. Price 25s. 0d.

This handbook is a collection of papers written by specialists in several fields of special investigation. There are chapters on chemical pathology, bacteriology, virology and allied procedures, haematology, nuclear medicine, diagnostic radiology, lung function also electro-encephalography and electromyography. The aim of the authors is to ensure that before any investigation is requested, it is understood what the indications for it are, what the results will show, and also what the patient will be subjected to, in other words, is the investigation worth doing. A guide is also given on how to prepare the patient and which specimen to collect, thus saving valuable time, very often money, and ensuring that a good result is obtained.

The text is clearly written, largely in note form, making reference easy. Each test or investigation is briefly described and an interpretation of the likely result given. Suggestions are also given as to how to investigate certain conditions, for example anaemia and renal failure. No detailed bibliography is given, but at the conclusion of each chapter there is a list of books suitable for further reading. This book is written mainly for the clinical medical student and for senior nursing staff. It will also be a useful reference book for housemen. Today with the hospital specialist departments opening their doors more and more to the general practitioner, a book such as this would be an asset to him.