Book reviews

Development in human learning. Edited by E. A. LUNZER, M.A., Ph.D. and J. F. MORRIS, B.Sc., Ph.D. London. Staples Press. 1968. Pp. xx+487. Price £3 10s.

In the new medical curricula much time is being devoted to the behavioural sciences, particularly psychology. The teachers of general practice, themselves rapidly developing their art and science, will have to pay particular attention to psychology in many of its aspects. Certainly to clinical psychology in their role of active clinicians, and certainly too to educational psychology in their role of teachers.

It is the theory or theories of learning which should rationally determine the methods of teaching. For teaching is the way to facilitate learning and understanding. From the strong and practical department of psychology in Manchester has come a trilogy 'Development in learning', of which the volume under review is the second. The trilogy is intended, say the editors, "as a course textbook for students in departments of education . . . and for all who are interested in the behavioural sciences".

These are not volumes for the general practitioner who regards the essence of his profession as an 'indefinable something', a comforting composite of experience, intuition, and—dare one say—blindness of mental vision. For those who would teach they will be useful textbooks. Balanced, fair, leaning not at all on jargon but, of necessity, using a new language as sparingly as may be to explain new and often admittedly unproven concepts. For those who would commence to enquire these books would also be admirable and more easily intelligible than most.

By its very nature psychology is likely to be one of the last sciences to become accurate and definitive. Its formal history is relatively short, and most works are eminently fair in presenting qualification, alternative theory and attribution. Concepts are argued with examples from observation and experiment but one must achieve the overall impression that postulates apply more firmly to groups or sets than to individuals. Here perhaps is the difficulty for the general practitioner commencing formal study of a fascinating and important field. He is so used to thinking of and dealing with the whole person, so used to dogmatising, that he may well mistake sound reasoning expressed with its conscious finite limitations as being woolly or ineffectual in practice.

In this volume learning in early childhood is well treated. Here is the critical time when the foundations of so many eventual happenings are laid. The development of the section on language treated as a means of communication, the development of grammar and a linguistic skill is excellent. Sections on 'programmed instruction' and 'psychology and the teacher' are of value to those seeking to understand their new profession of teaching.

This is an excellent introduction to the wider contemporary views of a rapidly developing science.

Urinary tract infection. Proceedings of the first National Symposium held in London, April, 1968. Edited by FRANCIS O'GRADY and WILLIAM BRUMFITT. London. Oxford University Press. 1968. Price £2 10s. 0d.

This account of an important symposium covers aspects of bacterial growth in urine, the susceptibility of the kidney to infection, and the bacteriology of the urinary tract infectors. There are sections on urinary infective disorders of childhood, the problem of pregnancy, and extensive cover of the treatment of urinary infections.

There were over 50 distinguished contributors, each paper is followed by an extensive list of references, there are many beautiful illustrations, and this book can be regarded as the last word on the subject (for the time being).

Acute respiratory diseases. Symposium organized by the College of Pathologists, February 1968. Edited by D. A. J. Tyrrell. Published by the Journal of Clinical Pathology. Pp. xii + 134. Price 30s. 0d.

Many studies have shown that acute respiratory disease forms a major part of the work-load of general practice in this country; therefore, the subject of this symposium is one of great concern and interest to all general practitioners. The edited proceedings of the symposium are published as a paper-bound book containing a number of excellent illustrations. The subject is examined from various aspects by distinguished contributors in different fields and together they provide an admirable review of the whole subject. Discussion with general practitioners often gives the impression that many regard the prescribing of antibiotics as the be-all and end-all consideration in acute respiratory disease. It is therefore of some interest to note the relatively very small emphasis which the symposium gave to bacterial infection. On the other hand, more than three quarters of the