

Book Reviews

Major Endocrine Disorders. S. LEONARD SIMPSON, with the collaboration of A. STUART MASON and G. I. M. SWYER. Third edition. Oxford University Press, 1959. p. vi—459. Price 50s.

Reading this book, two thoughts kept recurring to the reviewer. First, how much depends on the general practitioner if endocrine disorders are to be diagnosed early or at all. These are diseases which depend for diagnosis on the doctor carrying their memory somewhere near the front of his mind; they seldom shout their presence. If the doctor is not sensitive to the myxoedematous face or to the even more subtle characteristics of pituitary failure, he will miss them. Second, the general practitioner would be wise in the great majority of major endocrine problems to share responsibility for treatment with a specialist. Most of these conditions—more than thirty are described in this book—appear so rarely in one practice, and their treatment so obviously demands familiarity, that most of us are likely to help our patients best by taking advice first.

This is a good book. The writing is authoritative and clear. The book is beautifully produced. Clinical descriptions are preceded by accounts of physiology, but those who do not wish to read them need not do so since they are clearly demarcated.

A textbook on this subject planned strictly for the needs of general practitioners would probably allot space differently, giving more to the commoner problems and lesser diseases; nevertheless, a concession is made here by including chapters on the climacteric and abnormalities of menstruation; in both chapters the authors show that their vision extends beyond the confines of their specialty.

Diagnostic Biochemistry. H. N. CHRISTENSEN, PH.D. New York, Oxford University Press, 1959. pp. 291, price 52s.

This book is evidently the product of much deep, clear thought, and it sets out to inculcate thoughtfulness in its readers. It “does not seek to increase confidence in textbooks”, but tries to hold the doors to knowledge open by posing questions which the student can attempt to answer if he uses ordinary library facilities. There is also some attention drawn to mistakes, ambiguities and other sources of confusion in many modern published papers, so that the student will become a critical reader.

The chapters describe the movements of different substances in and out of the body compartments, with true emphasis on dynamics, and a final section explains with compelling logic the factors which

govern the methods of taking blood samples, preserving and transmitting them, and interpreting reports received on them.

Among many useful ideas revealed is the use of "pK" as a measure of the strength of a "weak" acid or buffer. Another thing which impressed your reviewer was the doubt thrown on the concept of alkalinity of cations (e.g. Na^+)—an idea which has been demoted from the level of accepted fact to that of useful convention.

Much has happened in the last decade in the field of biochemistry, and the average practising doctor will be astonished by this book—if he can follow even half of it! Should he make the effort he will be well rewarded.

Clinical Dermatology for Students and Practitioners. HARRY M. ROBINSON JR. B.S., M.D. and RAYMOND C. V. ROBINSON, B.S., M.D., M.Sc. Published by Bailliere, Tindall and Cox, London. pp. xi + 242. Illus. Price 68s.

This well-bound, clearly printed, and precisely indexed book can be of little or no value to students in this country. Very many conditions are described, the majority being rarities but possibly commonplace in Maryland. There are, for example, 39 fungal infections described. Most conditions get a similar length of treatment. They are alphabetically arranged in groups, but there is no mention of incidence or geographical distribution. There is no indication which is the commoner condition; acne or actinomycosis; psoriasis or parapsoriasis varioliformis.

Diagnostic aid frequently includes biopsy, for example in psoriasis. Physical examination, "hemograms" and "blood chemistries" are advised in the diagnosis of many diseases, but there is no description of what estimations should be done or of how the findings may differ from the normal.

Under the heading "Therapy" in the descriptions of the various conditions many drugs are mentioned, but the dosages are not. The application of psychosomatic medicine to dermatology and the occupational dermatoses is skated over with the lightest of dexterity. Instruction in the art of skin biopsy, a glossary of dermal pathological terms and a chapter on therapy all precede the descriptions of the skin conditions in which they may be used.

There are a number of good photographs and micro-photographs, in none of which is the degree of magnification mentioned. *Pedicular capitis* is represented as smaller than its ovum. The book is largely a dictionary of skin conditions with the advantages and drawbacks of such a composition.