

## Book reviews

**The tissues of the body.** Sixth edition. W. E. LE GROS CLARK, F.R.S. Oxford. The Clarendon Press. Pp. 1+424. Price £3.25.

This popular textbook continues to be revised with regularity. Although the general practitioner does not have to remember the details of anatomy, he should keep himself abreast of the increasing knowledge of the basic sciences on which his diagnoses and treatment are founded. In this book he will find all that he wishes to know expressed in a lucid and interesting manner. A useful present for the son or daughter who is studying biology or medicine.

**Virgin Wives; a study of unconsummated marriages** by LEONARD J. FRIEDMAN. Social science paperbacks. Foreword by MICHAEL BALINT. Tavistock publications. London. Pp. xiv+162.

This is the paperback of the book first published in 1962. It is a review of a hundred unconsummated marriages which were discussed at seminars held by the late Dr Michael Balint. Ten women doctors presented cases which they had dealt with in their family practices or in family planning clinics. The result of the research has been written up by Dr Friedman who was not himself otherwise implicated. After describing the origins of the project, he gives a review of the literature which he finds scanty and superficial. The body of the book consists of the presentation and analysis of case histories. This is an extremely delicate subject, yet it is dealt with clearly, cleanly and with sympathy. The patients are classified into those who "specialize in the defence of 'not knowing' about sexuality", those who are aggressive and for whom loving and fighting are confused, those who wished for a baby without intercourse, whose concern for the mother-child relationship outweighed their desire to be wives to their husbands. Folklore is brought in to make the narrative more interesting, but this is hardly necessary in a work on a subject so replete with human tragedy. Here we find one of the best expositions of the cult of Balintology, and yet the outcome in many cases was unsuccessful. The value of this book lies in the number of minutely related histories which will lead those doctors who are likely to meet problems of this kind to consider them with greater understanding. Dr Friedman has largely escaped the danger of banality and is to be congratulated on the clear prose in which he writes. Only once, in describing the result of treatment does he lapse. The patient had an aversion to looking at her husband's body and this was partially altered by treatment in that she could now look at him from the back only; "this suggests an unconscious wish to deny the difference

between the sexes—from the back, men and women look more similar".—And doubtless, like the grand old Duke of York, she found it less exciting.

Whether or not he is a fan of Balint, this is a book which will reward all practising doctors.

**Recent advances in paediatrics.** Forth edition.

Edited by DOUGLAS GAIRDNER and DAVID HULL. London. J. & A. Churchill. Pp. 567. £6.00.

In their preface the editors comment on the growth of 'the literature' from which such books as *Recent Advances in Paediatrics* are made. As they point out, this edition lists some 2,500 references, more than three times as many as in each of the first two editions in 1954 and 1958. These references clearly indicate the current areas of interest and growth in paediatrics, and from them the 15 contributors have culled 16 solid and informative papers.

As might be expected six of the 16 papers are on foetal and neonatal subjects, three of them on respiratory problems. The rest are somewhat more general—the assessment of respiratory function, endocrine function, the nephrotic syndrome, diabetes mellitus, seizure disorders, immunology, malnutrition, and the genetics of common malformations.

All these papers are deep and detailed; it would need experts at least the equals of their authors to make any full and valid criticism. But there are many nuggets of wise and interesting comment alongside the more highly specialized detail for those with a special interest in, and concern for, children and small babies. While this may not be a book for the family doctor's consulting-room shelf, it surely merits a place in the library of the postgraduate centre.

**The struggle for the Ministry of Health.** FRANK HONIGSBAUM. London. G. Bell & Sons. 1971. Pp. 9+80. Price £1.50.

The Ministry of Health was formed in 1919. To most of us looking back, the wonder is that it was so short a time ago that it started its quite essential work. What happened before that? And why should there have been a struggle to get it when it seems so logical an institution. That it should have been combined with another department caused some misgivings when it happened two years ago: Government is a curious institution and the bureaucratic mind sometimes difficult to understand. This little book explains just how difficult it can be. The state control of the health services was a slowly evolving process. From the time of the plague onwards the government sought the advice of the College of Physicians when epidemics