

Book reviews

Basic practical surgery. First edition. C. BARRIE WILLIAMS, M.D., F.R.C.S. Bristol. John Wright & Sons Ltd. 1971. Pp. 1+180. Price £1.75.

This book, designed for 'the surgical apprentice', is a compendium of miscellaneous information on the basic ingredients of operative surgery.

The first part is an informed catalogue of surgical equipment, dealing with ligatures and needles, general instruments and catheters, bougies, sounds and staffs. The teacher who is asked by the over-zealous student what catgut is and who invented it will find his answer here, and he will be able to announce with confidence what is the breaking-strain in Kg. of a surgeon's knot for varying grades of catgut. He will also know the French, English, American and Benique scale of catheter numbering, and will be able to convert from one to another.

Knives, bistouries and scissors and various types of forceps, retractors and clamps are described and illustrated and there are occasional interesting historical annotations. The rest of the book deals with Wound Drainage, Wound Infection, Haemostasis and Wound Healing. The author, after consideration of the physiological and pathological principles involved, discusses the various types of drainage-material, and gives advice on cleansing the skin and sterilizing instruments. Finally, he details differing methods of haemostasis and after considering wound-healing in general finishes by a section on repairing blood-vessels by suture and by graft.

This book should be of value to operating-theatre staff, to the final-year student, to the houseman and to the registrar who teaches them. It contains in a small compass a great deal of information not readily found elsewhere.

Antibiotic and chemotherapy. Third Edition. LAWRENCE P. GARROD, M.D., HON.L.L.D., F.R.C.P., FRANCIS O'GRADY, T.D., M.D., M.S.C., M.R.C.PATH. Edinburgh & London. E. & S. Livingstone. 1971. Pp. 1+499. Price £3.50 net.

In their preface to the first edition, the authors of this excellent book write that their aim has been to provide the clinician with as much factual information as possible about treatment directed against the microbe. It is hard to imagine how they could have succeeded better in a book of this size, and that a third edition should have been required so soon is evidence of its value.

The first section describes the properties of antibiotics and other drugs, with emphasis on their degree of activity against different species. The

second part is concerned with practical chemotherapy, dosage and the diseases of different systems.

The general practitioner tends to develop prescribing habits in isolation, and may, if he is not careful, lose sight of the scientific principles upon which his treatment should be based. The reviewer found this book quite fascinating, for the breadth of experience and the depth of clinical detail are the result of the authors' immense experience both in the laboratory and in the clinical discussion of actual cases.

This is one of the few books of which it can truly be said that it should form part of the general practitioner's working library, for there will be few problems of bacterial infection on which it will not throw enlightenment.

Blood disorders in the elderly. First edition. J. H. THOMAS, M.R.C.P., D.C.H. and D. E. B. POWELL, M.D., M.R.C.P., M.R.C.PATH. Bristol. John Wright & Sons Ltd. 1971. Pp. ii + 284. Price £4.50.

The authors of this book, a geriatrician and a pathologist, argue refreshingly that in the care of the elderly the boundaries between the specialties are artificial and increasingly difficult to maintain. Thus blood diseases are best considered as part of general medicine and this book is an informed and helpful attempt to bridge the gap between the laboratory and the ward.

Blood diseases are far from uncommon in the elderly, but as the authors crisply remark "The belief that a mild degree of anaemia is to be expected in the aged . . . is erroneous. The haemoglobin level should be the adult normal, even in centenarians". It follows that anaemia must be adequately investigated and since its clinical features are often superimposed on other diseases, a careful search should be made for other conditions.

The book devotes special attention to three aspects of disease particularly marked in the elderly—malabsorption, antibody and enzyme level alterations and malignant changes in cells, and incomplete physiological recovery after illness. The chapter on the prevention of anaemia is an instance of the way in which the authors continually relate their work in the ward and the laboratory to the daily needs of the patient: it is unusual to find the range of such a book swinging in one chapter from methods of detection of anaemia, clinical and technical, to the importance of the 'Meals-on-Wheels' service in ensuring adequate intake of iron, vitamin B12 and folate and the significance of loneliness, decreased mobility