What makes this book immediately attractive is, undoubtedly, that it starts from where the doctor starts, with symptoms, considers the diagnostic possibilities which each of these raise, and only then discusses some of the disease entities in question. "In particular, our first clinical contact," remark the authors, "is not with a disease . . . but with a patient complaining of symptoms or presenting physical signs." For the students encountering patients for the first time, and for the young postgraduate, this approach has obvious merit.

There is great merit, too, in starting the text with a chapter on "psychogenic symptoms". Disentangling symptoms of psychological origin from those of somatic origin remains one of the doctor's most difficult tasks. As Pickering (1974) has commented: "It is an issue which most doctors like to avoid and it demands the highest level of professional skill." In his preface, Dr Seward reminds us that psychological activity produces effects on all the physiological systems of the body; and he formally rejects any dichotomy of mind and body. However, in spite of this, he does not entirely succeed in shaking off his proscribed duality. Thus, for example, he writes: "Headache in the psychoneurotic subject is less a pain than an expression in physical terms of the underlying disturbed mental state, a symbolic expression of psychological stress rather than a statement of fact." Further (such is the tyranny of present clinical classification), he conveys the impression that all somatic expressions of psychological stress represent either "anxiety states" or "masks" of "depressive illness".

In all, 24 symptoms are considered. Each chapter is prefaced by a "synopsis of causes"; and in all these synopses, cases "which are commoner in Europe or are of clinical urgency are italicized". Since, however, what is common is not always urgent, and what is urgent is not always common, such use of italics is liable to be misleading (e.g. as causes of thoracic pain, "pneumothorax" is italicized, "collapse of the lung" is not; "reflux oesophagitis" is italicized while "rupture" is not; and so on). A uniform typeface would have been preferable in these sections.

Following the synopsis, each chapter has brief sections on the physiology of the symptom concerned and on diagnostic approaches to its assessment, followed by a brief description of some of the major disease entities involved. Inevitably in a book of no more than 350 pages, these descriptions are extremely compressed and, the reader may well feel, often superficial. Periodically, as in the discussion of hypertension, statistics are produced in summarized dogmatic form without reference to their source. Such will not satisfy the inquisitive mind of contemporary students; and it is at this point that they will wish to move back to more satisfying texts.

H. J. WRIGHT

BLEEDERS COME FIRST

Colin Douglas

Canongate Publishing
Edinburgh (1979)
171 pages. Price £4.95

In his second novel, Colin Douglas has got the recipe for success about right—a large slice of Kildare, a leavening of Doctor in the House, much good clinical material, beautifully presented and sufficiently ghoulish to hook the layman, and a zest of illicit sex into the bargain: nobody can ask for more.

Our hero is a young casualty officer in a large Scottish hospital. His duties are, it appears, to direct his material to the correct one of the many specialist departments by which he is fortunate enough to be surrounded. He manages this, and has time to conduct an affaire with the wife of a sick colleague, which unendearing activity appears to have no beginning and no end. Interwoven with this is the tale of the Indian doctor in perpetual pursuit of a fellowship—which quest has a tragic end. A tenuous plot, indeed, but with all that lovely gory stuff who needs a plot, anyway?

The day-to-day work of Casualty is described with such skill that the intelligent layman will understand easily, and the medical reader will find his interest fully engaged. Good, accurate, racy stuff.

What a pity it is, then, that the author allows what one can only describe as an obsession to intrude. He never misses an opportunity to make venomous and tasteless attacks on his general practitioner colleagues.

Let those general practitioners who lack insight know that they are lazy, ignorant, and inaccessible, and employ professional obstructionists to deal with their telephone calls. (I use the author's words.) And how interesting it is for those of us who had thought we had spent much time gently educating young casualty officers, to discover that "not infrequently, when faced with the obvious consequences of neglect or mismanagement by an established and virtually invulnerable(!) member of the profession, a casualty officer one or two years out of the egg had to treat the patient and save the day . . ." He also has to "minimise discussion of previous fumblings". Ah well, we live and learn.

Colin Douglas has the facility and the material to write more and interesting books, and it is to be hoped that the catharsis provided by this one will enable him to rid himself of his little hangup—at least in print—for his own sake and that of his readers. Lapses of taste of this order do not pay off in the long run—however much they may pander to the tastes of those addicted to sensationalism.

In short, this is a good little book spoilt.

JOHN MILES

STRESS AND RELAXATION

Jane Madders

Martin Dunitz
London (1979)
128 pages. Price £1.95

In March 1978 this *Journal* reviewed Mrs Madders' previous short book *Relax,* which has now been enlarged in text and illustrations. The result is a detailed book on an important subject which is pleasant to handle and which general practitioners will not hesitate to recommend to their patients. It is very much to be hoped that work-addicted doctors will themselves heed its lessons.

S. L. BARLEY

PYJAMAS DON'T MATTER

Trish Gribben

John Murray
London (1979)
51 pages. Price £2.50

I look forward to the day when a couple of three-year-olds get together and write the definitive manual of childhood. When they do, I know that this picture-filled guide for parents will be one of the books to which they will turn for material on how to be a successful toddler. In the meantime, we parents can be grateful for an amusing and unpretentious account of child rearing.

All the important bodily functions are sensibly and briefly covered. There are pages headed "Why does she cry?" and "Why doesn't she sleep?", and the section called "Knowing (roughly) a little of what to expect" gives a very readable, recognizable, and not too neur-