

Book Reviews

The Encyclopaedia of General Practice. Edited by G. F. ABERCROMBIE, *V.R.D.*, M.A., M.D., and R. M. S. MCCONAGHEY, M.D. 1964. London. Butterworths. Volume 5. Pp. xii + 512. Price £4 5s. per volume. (£29 15s. the set of 6 volumes with appendices and index).

'Poisoning to Skin' is the title conveying the contents of Volume 5. It covers less than four letters of the alphabet, but deals with some of the largest areas of our work in daily practice. One hundred and twenty pages on psychological medicine is in 12 sections written by five consultants and seven general practitioners. The family doctor's needs in early diagnosis in variety of onset and his inescapable responsibility in long-term support are faced throughout. Depressive states (John Horder) and obsessional states and phobias (C. A. H. Watts) are instances of work in general practice added to unusual experience and study of these subjects, whereas psychosis (Martin Roth) and mental deficiency (David Prentice) who are both specialists show the skill with which the family doctor's problems are recognized, particularly in relation to diagnosis and prognosis.

The chapter on skin is in 49 sections and fills almost 200 pages. Authorship is divided between dermatologists who predominate and a few general practitioners. Several of the authors are responsible for a number of sections. The subject matter is a consequence of skilful writing combined with editing which has preserved the background panorama of day-to-day medical problems expressed in deviations of skin physiology and pathology. Occasional overlap is unavoidable. Particularly useful is drug eruptions (R. J. Cairns), erythema (R. M. B. MacKenna) and hirsutism (D. D. Munro), each authoritative from special experience. Alopecia and athlete's foot (both by Oswald Morton) are of particular value in practice owing to chronicity.

Among the short chapters prognosis (Lindsey Batten) offers a guide from professional and worldly wisdom in a medium of humanity that deserves many re-readings. Prostate (I. H. Griffiths) is compact, clear, and readable, with an admirably succinct opening paragraph on topography and structure. Sexual assault and sexual perversion (F. E. Camps) give precisely the combination of therapeutic and statutory information that is required from such a reference book in these matters. Raynaud's phenomenon and Raynaud's disease (J. H. Hunt) illustrate that contribution that this encyclopaedia can make from an author's wide experience combined with much knowledge. Poisoning (Allan Birch) is recommended in similar words, where the author's knowledge is highly specialized and adjusted to the family doctor's particular responsibilities

in handling these emergencies.

This volume appears to have gained from the publication of the first four. It is particularly well adapted to its purpose supplying quickly available yet authoritative readable matter in a family doctor's consulting room.

Notes on Physical Diagnosis. JACOB ZATUCHNI, A.B., M.S., M.D., Philadelphia. F. A. Davis Company. Oxford. Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1964. Pp. viii + 400. Price 48s.

The title of this book might be thought to indicate a slim volume of reflections on certain aspects of the physical examination of a patient. In fact, it is a tautly-written book of 365 pages covering the subject in great detail. Intended for students beginning clinical work, it is more suitable, because of this detail, for postgraduate study.

Nevertheless, it is an admirable exposition of the art and science of physical examination. The author, professor of clinical medicine in Philadelphia, is very readable, with an economic style of short sentences and simple phrases, free from the devious tautology so often found in American writing. The simplification of classical spelling is somewhat disconcerting on account of its inconsistency. Why, for instance, write "fecal" and, shortly afterwards, "cystocoele"? A more serious criticism is that the book is overloaded for its purpose.

A scheme for physical examination that envisages 482 items might be thought excessive and forbidding at the start of a clinical course. It is reckoned to take three hours, a time-consuming exercise. On the other hand, it is as well to begin as you mean to go on and, from that point of view perhaps, the more detailed the better. The book, however, is more suitable for the older practitioner, who cannot fail to derive benefit from the clarity of expression and from the emphasis laid on physical signs, some of which he may have forgotten or may never have heard of before!

It is encouraging to receive such a book which reiterates the value of physical examination, a discipline in which the general practitioner should be pre-eminent but in which so often he is sadly lacking. Reference may here be made to the two books by Braun, which were reviewed in the September journal of the College and which promulgate a new approach to the difficult problem of physical examination in general practice. This reviewer is not sufficiently aware of Braun's thesis to comment but it must be obvious that any system which can find an efficient method of physical examination between the extremes of three hours per patient and no examination at all should be looked at. At present it is left to the doctor's experience, which should teach him what are the essentials that must be included, while the complaint of the patient directs him to the area requiring more detailed assay. So far as can be understood, the collation and codification of this experience is one of the objects of the two books mentioned above.

On the whole, the book under review is well produced. The print is large and clear and the size is handy. The proof-reading has been somewhat sloppy for there are a number of misprints and, on page 208, part of the text is missing. The index is full and of easy reference, the bibliography complete and there are, fortunately, no footnotes, all relevant