THE PRINCIPLES OF THERAPEUTICS.

By Francis R. Fraser. Williams & Wilkins Coy. Baltimore. 1934. Price 9/-.

This small volume consists of a series of lectures delivered in the School of Medicine of Vanderbilt University by Prof. Francis R. Fraser which we cordially recommend to the notice of all who are entrusted with the care of the sick, but particularly to those who are engaged in the education of the medical student. The lectures were instituted to perpetuate the memory of that great American educationalist, Abraham Flexner, and Prof. Fraser delivered the third series in the Spring of 1933. The subject of the lectures seems to us to be peculiarly appropriate for such an occasion, as they consist of the experience and philosophy of a teacher of medicine on the science and art of therapeutics. Prof. Fraser has dealt with the question of therapeutics in a very broad fashion, discussing it from the point of view of the disease process itself, the symptoms of the disease and finally the patient.

A short survey of the history of the treatment of disease from pre-Christian times is given by way of an introduction and this is utilised to reveal the general principles which should be observed. Most space, however, is devoted to a discussion of the real advances in the prevention and cure of disease, which, it is interesting to note in passing, have practically all taken place within our life time. The fruits of bacteriology in vaccine therapy, of immunology in serum treatment, of the discovery of the accessory food factors in dietetics and of the appreciation of the internal secretions in gland therapy are all discussed in a most interesting and stimulating manner. Special attention is given to those preparations whose powers have been proved, although directions in which possible developments might lead to greater or fresh successes are not lost sight of.

The standardisation of therapeutic remedies, so that reliable and uniform results may be obtained, is another aspect of the therapeutic problem which Prof. Fraser considers at some length. He describes how this procedure is carried out, he reveals the difficulties and limitations of the question, he points out where further information is required and suggests, as he does throughout the lectures, lines of investigation by which further knowledge might be obtained.

THE MYTH OF THE MYSTIC EAST.


Lieut.-Colonel Elliot, I.M.S., has written a fascinating book on the East, which will give the reader a great insight into the ways and habits of the native in a manner that it is not usual to find in other books on the same subject. During his many years of experience in India, Colonel Elliot has gained an intimate knowledge of native foibles, virtues and vices, all of which he records in his own inimitable way. In this book his primary object is to show that the mysticism of the East is a myth, and is based largely on trickery and to some extent on the ease with which the Occident can be deceived by the Orient. In our view he has amply proved his point, and this is especially apparent in his chapters on the “rope trick”. Colonel Elliot shows in a masterly analysis that there is no evidence that the “rope trick” has ever been performed. The last part of the book is concerned with the habits and dangers of snakes. The author is a well-known authority on this subject, and whereas the ordinary man regards snakes as loathsome and terrifying animals, Colonel Elliot looks upon them in the light of pets, to be humoured and made use of. This is particularly interesting in these days, when the researches on snake venom seem to hold out a promise for the therapeutic treatment of certain diseases which have hitherto defied medical resources.

This is a book which we can recommend to any reader. It is well written, with insight, knowledge and humour. Some of the chapters are based on articles which have already appeared in “Blackwood’s Magazine”, and the present volume is obviously the result of first-hand knowledge and sympathetic understanding.