BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN HUNTER

So many lives of John Hunter have been published, that it is probably impossible for an author to write about anything new. Not only is there a plethora of biographies, but the number of orations and other papers which have illuminated John Hunter himself, the times in which he lived, the influence of his work on the generations that have survived him, number hundreds. Yet, although John Hunter is a name commemorated and revered in all medical circles, not only in the British Isles, but throughout the world, his name conveys little to many of the general public. This is a curious fact, when one reflects that Harvey, Jenner, Pasteur, Lister and many others are well known to the 'man in the street,' even to the extent of knowledge of how they achieved their fame.

Consequently 'John Hunter' by the late Dr. S. Roodhouse Gloyne may help to fill this gap. It is a book, written not so much for the medical profession as for the general public, many of whom are interested in great men of the past, whose names still live and whose work has caused a profound effect on those who followed him, more especially if that effect has endured. In this book there is nothing new, as regards facts—but these have been collected in a most interesting and readable manner. Particularly has Dr. Gloyne painted a picture of the times in which John Hunter worked so that his extraordinary industry, and his wide interest in everything living, are presented in an atmosphere full of difficulty, largely due to lack of material resources and also to many instances of personal disagreements. It is indeed a book that anyone who has not heard of John Hunter can enjoy and from which he can learn something.

Dr. Gloyne pays just tribute to John's brother William without whom John would never have achieved his fame. A curious mistake has crept in here, as John is recorded to have been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society ten years before William. It is true that John was elected first, but there was an interval of only three months before William received a like honour. It is, of course, traditional that John, in his latter years, became difficult as a colleague, and was frequently involved in arguments and quarrels. Yet, the Hunterian Society possesses a gold watch presented to him by those very colleagues, who by disagreement in committee are reputed to have caused his fatal attack of what today would be called coronary thrombosis.

Dr. Gloyne draws attention to the unfortunate quarrels that so frequently occurred between men, all of them doing good work—but all envious of each other and mostly unwilling to cede priority of discovery or publication. This unfortunate attitude even caused the bitter quarrel (never made up) between the two brothers. It is perhaps a pity that, although the egregious Jesse Foot is condemned, more extracts of his abuse were not given, in order to emphasize the utter contempt his diatribes deserved. The destruction of Hunter's papers by Sir Everard Home is mentioned, and condemned. In our view it was a dastardly act, and throws into relief the loyalty and faithfulness of William Clift. He it was who was responsible in no small measure for the handing down to posterity of the teaching of this great man. We commend this book, more especially as it may inspire some to further research.

A. E. M. W.

BROMPTON HOSPITAL REPORTS.
Vol. XVIII, 1949
Pp. vii + 221. London: Brompton Hospital Research Dept. 12s. 6d.

The Brompton Hospital Reports for 1949, beautifully produced and printed entirely on art paper, contain a selection of the articles recently published by members of the staff of the hospital. Taken collectively, the contributions almost provide in themselves a survey of respiratory disease, and thus will prove of particular value to the general worker who has not the time to trace out original sources, nor perhaps easy access to the special journals involved. The total field covered is a wide one, and the illustrations are excellent.

A SYNOPSIS OF ANAESTHESIA

It is good to welcome the second edition of this Synopsis, with over 100 pages of additional information, and a further 24 illustrations. Especially interesting is the new chapter on the anaesthetic out-patient clinic, which is timely.

Dr. Alfred Lee has managed to bring his book up to date in a skilful manner and has maintained the very high standard which he set in the first edition. This book is extremely easy to read and sound information can be obtained very quickly, and therefore should be very welcome to young
anaesthetists who are faced with problem anaesthetics in emergencies. The Synopsis can be strongly recommended to those who are preparing for the D.A. examination, for information, and as an excellent example of how to marshal knowledge clearly and concisely. Dr. Alfred Lee and the publishers are to be congratulated on producing a second edition of a fine book.

W.K.R.

NUTRITIONAL DATA
(Formerly Nutritional Charts)

This will be a valuable reference book for those who are engaged in nutritional studies and research. It contains useful tables of nutrients, which include copper among the minerals. The dietary sources of foods are given and their positive functions, together with the various signs and symptoms of nutritional deficiencies. The book also contains tables of the recommended dietary allowances, and in addition the nutritive composition of Heinz products is given in detail, together with the ingredients used in their preparation. These figures will be of value to doctors and dietitians who must work in pediatric clinics.

An extensive bibliography which should encourage further reading, completes this book.

THE RESULTS OF RADIUM AND X-RAY THERAPY IN MALIGNANT DISEASE
Being the Third Statistical Report from the Radium Institute, the Christie Hospital, and Holt Radium Institute, Manchester.


This report is concerned mainly with the analysis of some 10,000 new cases of malignant disease treated at the Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute in the war years of 1940 to 1944.

The report is in three sections. The first is intended for, and is of particular value to, those interested in cancer and its treatment, but who are not concerned with individual techniques of radiotherapy. The cases are grouped under anatomical sites and admirably simple tables are introduced by short, sometimes too short, commentaries containing a few general observations, usually including indications for treatment by methods other than irradiation. This is in keeping, as throughout the book can be seen continually that close co-ordination between surgeon and radiotherapist which is essential for the proper treatment of cancer.

In the second part the cases are presented in similar tables with added details of the radiotherapeutic methods employed. The third part consists of a few pages devoted to patients treated between 1934 and 1938 considered in terms of ten-year survival rates.

The final figures are shown first directly, then corrected by adding a fraction based on actuarial figures of the natural death rate from intercurrent causes. This is a fair and an important consideration when dealing with patients so many of whom are elderly. Quotations of figures in a review tend to be misleading; they must be examined as they stand in this report.

This survey gives an invaluable idea of the treatment of cancer by these methods on a large scale and over reasonably long periods. It gives, too, a perspective of the disease which is far truer than can easily be obtained from general textbooks or from limited personal experience. It should be carefully studied by those who treat malignant disease extensively, and should be available to all who propose to treat the disease at all.

HAY FEVER: A KEY TO ALLERGIC DISORDERS

This book gives a personal account of the observations and clinical experiences of the author, which extend over a period of more than 40 years. Coming as it does from the pen of so distinguished a pioneer in the field of allergy it could not fail to contain much valuable information. In addition, however, it is written in such a charmingly idiosyncratic manner and enlivened by so many humorous touches that for the reviewer, at least, it has been not only a duty but a pleasure to read. At the same time it is in no sense a textbook of the allergic diseases: there are many gaps that the author makes no attempt to fill since they are aspects of these disorders in which he has had no first-hand experience; there are also no references to the published work of others.

Although, as the title suggests, the central theme is concerned with hay fever, asthma is almost equally fully discussed. The various factors concerned in the precipitation of symptoms are analysed in detail and exemplified by frequent references to case histories, briefly and humorously recounted. Although the problems of sensitization and desensitization to atopens, or ‘pathophanes’ as Dr. Freeman prefers to call them, occupy the major part of the book, there are three excellent chapters relating to the emotional and one each to the bacterial, traumatic and ‘serous leak’ factors.

Full details are given concerning collection of pollens, preparations of extracts and the author’s method of skin testing (‘the prick method’). An exact account of the way in which the patient is taught to desensitize himself to pollen with approximately 54 injections of increasing strength is also included. The immunological aspects of sensitivity are discussed. Vaccine therapy is also described in detail.

Dr. Freeman is not always in agreement with