Book Reviews

EDEN AND HOLLAND'S MANUAL OF OBSTETRICS

The fact that within four years yet another edition of this standard text book has been called for, is itself proof of its popularity. In fact, it does cover the whole of the requirements of any candidate for any qualifying examination in obstetrics.

Furthermore, it virtually covers everything that the postgraduate needs to know about the subject for higher degrees in obstetrics. If only one could persuade postgraduate students to concentrate on a book such as this and not confuse themselves by reading unnecessary journals and papers. Here is not only crystallised the cumulation of knowledge obtained by Mr. Brews from his predecessors as editors of this text book, but also a wise and balanced summary of current obstetric practice such as can be produced only by a man as well versed in the practical aspects of his subject as in the academic.

There are minor constructive criticisms to be made.

Fig. 371 seems to be slightly wrongly labelled.

Some of the illustrations might well be dispensed with, especially such as the rather ugly ones on pp. (plates) 19 and 20 where the colour process has not really been quite up to standard.

Once again, the dust jacket of J. & A. Churchill's books calls for criticism because it is dull and un-interesting, as, indeed, is the binding of the book itself.

The text itself deserves a more presentable setting.

E.E.P.

5-HYDROXYTRYPTAMINE

This is a report of the proceedings of a symposium organized by the Coordinating Committee for Symposia on Drug Action in London on April 1 and 2, 1957. The publishers and editor are to be congratulated on the speed with which the report has been published.

The subject is divided into three main headings, namely, occurrence, metabolism and actions, the latter being further subdivided into a number of sections. A verbatim report of the discussion at the end of each section is also included.

This is a most useful book, as it contains contributions from prominent workers in many countries who are actively engaged in the study of this remarkable substance. Unfortunately Dr. V. Ermlever, one of the earliest workers in the field, was unable to be present.

The complexity of the problem which 5-hydroxytryptamine (serotonin) presents, is well illustrated by the titles of the various sections devoted to its actions. These are as follows—cardiovascular; nerve endings and ganglia; carcinoids; anaphylaxis; gastric secretion. There is also a section on peripheral antagonists and one on central actions and antagonists.

One of the greatest difficulties met with in investigating serotonin is that of differentiating between pharmacological and physiological effects, and Sir Charles Harlington in his opening remarks stresses the need for a solution to this problem. Although the function of serotonin in normal physiology is still not finally decided, the present volume gives most of the available evidence in a compact and easily accessible form which should be helpful to all those interested in the subject. It will undoubtedly stimulate further interest in this fascinating biochemical problem.

F.W.D.

HOMOSEXUALITY, TRANSVESTISM AND CHANGE OF SEX

The author undertook to write this book in the first place in order to satisfy medical enquiries about the 'change of sex' operation. Such an operation, however, is but one stage of an extremely complex process of maldevelopment and maladaptation, and the book, therefore, covers some of the aspects of sexuality which lead to surgery of this kind.

The early chapters consider homosexuality and transvestism, and compare social attitudes towards them. The Wolfenden Report is discussed, together with the treatment of homosexuals, including the use of sex hormones and castration. Further chapters describe in a detailed and fully illustrated way the surgical methods employed in the Leber case, which is very fully reported, and moral and legal issues. Three appendices give legal, psychiatric and surgical reports respectively.

While this subject is too comprehensive to be dealt with adequately in such a small volume, this is the best presentation of the facts which has so far
5-Hydroxytryptamine

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