Book Reviews

Advances in Non-Invasive Nephrology. Proceedings of the International Congress of Non-Invasive Diagnosis of Kidney Disease, held in Vienna, September 1983, edited by Gert Lubec and Vito Campese. Pp. xi + 300, illustrated. John Libbey, London, Paris, 1985. £30, US\$53, Ffr385.

The cleverly conceived title of this symposium served to bring together workers from many different disciplines from all over the world to present what was in 1983 the latest in diagnostic techniques available to the nephrologist. Having left full time nephrology shortly after this symposium I was distressed to find how much I did not know about the subject even then and this book has been a delightful opportunity to bring myself at least partially up to date. It has sections on radiology and related imaging, non-radiological imaging techniques and a large section on biochemical methods, a third of which is devoted to urinary enzymes. There is a section on pathophysiological background comprising a brilliant review by Jan Brod on hypertension, which should have a wide appeal. There is also an immunological section.

Inevitably the choice of subjects appears idiosyncratic and incomplete but I have to say that very few of the 64 chapters fail to yield something of interest. I enjoyed particularly chapters on radiological and non-radiological imaging many of which gave a very good background to the techniques, and sufficient information for radiologists interested in expanding their diagnostic facilities for nephrology patients. Most of the chapters are quite short with well presented data and illustration and the references given at the end of each chapter are consistent in style and seem to be well chosen without being exhaustive.

The book is a must for nephrologists and I will lend it to both my biochemical and radiological colleagues and I feel also that there is enough in it to interest the enlightened general physician. It is well worth its price of £30.

M.J. Weston
*Chelmsford and Essex Hospital,
London Road,
Chelmsford, Essex CM2 0QH.*

Aids to Clinical Examination, Peter C. Hayes and Ronald S. MacWalter. Pp. iii + 114, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1986. £4.95.

This book aims to be an aid both for undergraduate and postgraduate students. As the authors state in their introduction, many students have their own prepared cards as a help in clinical examination. This book may replace these notes and could encourage systematic examination.

In the first 9 chapters different organ systems and/or parts of the body are reviewed. The remaining 10 chapters are devoted to selected clinical conditions. The framework of the book is well-organized, the discussion of the different subjects sometimes amazingly complete (auscultation over the eyeball!).

All chapters are divided according to the kind of examina-

tions (inspection, palpation, etc.). At the left side of each page catchwords are mentioned, followed by explanations and/or additions at the right side. This division makes the book easily accessible.

Some points of detail show (minor) shortcomings. For instance in the chapter on diabetes mellitus too much emphasis is laid on urinalysis, an examination which is rapidly losing ground when compared with the daily blood glucose profiles made by the patients themselves at home. Also it could have been stated in the chapter on thyrotoxicosis that the obvious form is nearly always caused by Graves' disease and that the hyperthyroid patient with a multinodular goitre often has monosymptomatic disease (mostly tachycardia).

On the whole, this book can be a useful aid for students and may also be helpful for those physicians who are not very experienced in clinical examination. The book could well become as popular as the 'Aids' to undergraduate and postgraduate medicine by J.L. Burton which was published earlier by the same publisher.

J.W.F. Elte
*Department of Internal Medicine,
St. Franciscus Gasthuis,
NL – 3045 PM Rotterdam, Netherlands.*

An Autumn Life: How a Surgeon Faced His Fatal Illness, Ethel Helman. Pp. 96. Faber, London, Boston, 1986. £2.95.

In 1980 Percy Helman, an internationally renowned surgeon, discovered that he was suffering from the very disease against which he had been fighting throughout his professional life: cancer.

This is the story of how he, his wife Ethel, their family and their friends coped with the initial shock, the effects of illness on family relationships and the surges of optimism and despair that accompanied the progress of the disease. It was inspired by, and is based on tapes recorded by Percy Helman as he monitored his own physical and mental reactions during the two years of his illness. The tapes are, in part, a medical record. They also reflect his hopes and fears as they chart his response to the challenges his illness made upon him. His outlook on life was radically altered and his own life enriched by his dependence on others and by a greater understanding of the needs of other cancer patients.

Ethel Helman found the tapes after her husband's death. Convinced that they were made for the purpose of helping others to face the prospect of serious illness, she has integrated them with her own account of their experience as a family. *An Autumn Life* is a tribute to Helman's resilience and courage. It also confirms Percy Helman's claim that the last months of his life, filled with a new compassion for his patients and a more acute awareness of simple pleasure, were for him the best time.

This story was especially moving for me because it dealt with people's attitudes to death and to the dying. I have always shied away from such a morbid subject, but since a