Book Reviews

and contour changes are well demonstrated as, for example, in fractures and radiology of the gastro-intestinal tract with contrast media, but the method is inadequate if an attempt is made to differentiate between varying densities and complex shadows, particularly in the chapters on diseases of the chest and in some of the illustrations of bone tumours and bone and joint diseases.

It is difficult to cover such a wide subject in a short volume, so that the book can be regarded only as an outline of X-ray interpretation. The basic principles are well covered, however, and the standard of production is what we have come to expect from the Oxford University Press.

R.E.S.

FELLOWSHIP EXAMINATION PAPERS for Diplomas of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, 1947-51


An invaluable collection of the papers of the past five years, sine qua non for all Fellowship candidates and their tutors.

THE CARE OF THE AGEING AND CHRONIC SICK


This well-produced paper-covered book reprints in convenient form seven papers of outstanding importance to workers in the field of geriatrics, as well as an extract from the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine (1950) on the same subject. The papers comprise Professor Thomson’s Lumleian lectures for 1949, and five papers by Dr. C. R. Lowe and Professor McKeown, the latter reprinted from the British Journal of Social Medicine and the British Medical Journal. To this symposium, Professor Thomson adds a valuable preface.

Professor Thomson’s Lumleian lectures are a brilliant and scholarly contribution to the understanding of the whole problem of the care of the aged, both in and out of hospital. They should be looked on as a ‘must’ by every serious worker in the clinical and administrative field. The contributions of Drs. Lowe and McKeown, valuable as they are to the clinician, are of fundamental importance to all long-term planners in every field of medicine.

The picture they draw of a hospital of over a thousand patients, of whom 46 per cent. were incontinent and well over 90 per cent. bed-ridden, is a truly appalling one, smacking as it does of the 18th rather than the 20th century. The mental apathy and ‘subtle disintegration of human personality’ (in Professor Thomson’s own words) adds to the gloom of the picture. From this picture they draw the heartening conclusions (implicit or expressed) that the bulk of such patients should be capable of being rehabilitated, if handled early, and that only one-fifth of the present hospital ‘chronic sick’ population require general hospital treatment at all. This offers a firm statistical basis for the experience of workers in smaller fields. Not the least interesting part of the survey was that of 393 patients on the waiting list, only 40 per cent. were thought to merit admission to the hospital for the chronic sick. This emphasizes the importance of ‘screening’ waiting lists by domiciliary visits. Part of the value of this work lies in the ‘human approach.’ Some of Thomson’s closing words (p. 130), ‘Our task is to learn how to give vitality and significance to the later years of human life,’ are applicable to every doctor.

The authors are to be warmly congratulated on their work and the Birmingham Regional Hospital Board for sponsoring it.

T.N.R.

ORAL AND DENTAL DISEASES


A large printing of the first edition having been quickly exhausted, Professor Stones has had the opportunity of presenting a second edition fully revised and in parts rewritten. He has incorporated the results of further research work by himself and others, and a new section on diseases of the muscles and of the nervous system appears. As in the case of the first edition, the author is to be congratulated on his immense task which is well produced and eminently readable.

The interest of the medical practitioner might well be engaged in particular in the chapters dealing with dental caries. The problems involved are fully set out and discussed, particularly as to whether the cause of the disease is initially either on acido-genic or a proteolytic process. A feature of these chapters and indeed of the whole work is that no likely theory is ignored although proper development is given to those ideas which by experience have proved themselves more acceptable. The non-dental reader need have no fear of becoming involved in matters which are the province only of the dental surgeon, operative dentistry being discussed only with regard to its effect on the dental tissues. The whole work is concerned with diseases and injuries of the mouth more particularly from the point of view of their aetiology, histopathology and clinical appearances.

As a reference book its value is enhanced by the number of illustrations, many in colour, which bring out the points made in the text. For student and practitioner these illustrations will be of considerable value as an aid to diagnosis of the less frequently seen conditions in and around the oral cavity. For those studying for a higher qualification or engaged in research the book is of inexhaustible value in itself, as well as for the lists of references at the end of each chapter which act as
Covering a subject in which personal judgment and prejudice play so important a part, criticism may easily be invidious. But it seems a pity that in the chapter on hernia all the methods described for the repair of an inguinal hernia (including even Gallie's operation!) state that the conjoint and inguinal ligaments should be apposed, and that there is no description of a lattice type of repair. Further in performing a gastrectomy under local anaesthesia, the catheter can nearly always be inserted without delivering a portion of the stomach outside the abdomen and holding it there in clamps as shown in the illustrations. And need facial skin be insulated with heavy toothed clamps as shown in the figure illustrating excision of carcinoma of the cheek? However, such criticisms must not be taken to decry the overall quality of this book, which covers all branches of operative surgery in an authoritative manner, and which contains much practical information of particular value to postgraduates and young practising surgeons.

MEDICAL DISORDERS OF THE LOCOMOTOR SYSTEM, INCLUDING RHEUMATIC DISEASES

By Ernest Fletcher, M.A., M.D., M.R.C.P.


The second edition of this important and valuable textbook is to be welcomed. Progress in rheumatic diseases has been so rapid that it appears only four years after the first, with the addition of a long appendix on the pituitary-adrenal system and new sections from six contributors: Professor S. L. Baker writes a masterly chapter on the Physiology and Pathology of Bone, Professor C. R. Rimington writes on Synovial Mucin, and Dr. H. J. Gibson, Dr. J. Barrie Murray, Dr. G. D. Kersley and Dr. A. P. Fletcher write respectively on Laboratory Findings, Psychiatric Aspects, Hydrotherapy and Pain. To name these additions alone is to convey some idea of the scope of the book.

To single out points for adverse criticism is carping, but so authoritative a work should refer to the value of the QT interval in the diagnosis of cardiac involvement in acute rheumatism and should mention that salicylates and cardiac failure may mask the rise in E.S.R. (on p. 226 we read that the only exception to the rule that the E.S.R. is raised in acute rheumatism is when chorea is the only manifestation). The neuropathic joint of diabetes is not mentioned. The review of the pituitary-adrenal system is remarkably complete, but it should be emphasized that cortisone itself retards wound healing (p. 824). However, these are minor flaws in a very complete and valuable book.