

anced and illustrated shows the author to be a scholar, and the section on auscultation in heart disease, the crucial part of the monograph, is well-informed and well-documented. And how reassuring it is to find a contemporary American author whose interest and vision extends beyond the limits of the United States!

The illustrations are mainly 'spectral phonocardiograms' (or 'sound spectrograms'), known in this country only through the writing of the author and a few others. The principle is best understood by considering the heart sounds, in electrical form, being passed through a large number of electrical filters each of which is tuned to a different and specific frequency. The output of each filter activates a tiny bulb. The play of the bank of lights on a moving film inscribes the spectral phonocardiogram. The vertical scale represents frequency, and the density of the recording indicates the intensity of the noise. The author claims a number of advantages for this technique. Theoretically irrefutable, these merits stand or fall depending on the technical perfection of the record. The murmurs of pure severe aortic or pulmonary stenosis or mitral incompetence produce beautiful pictures by this method, as they do by the conventional oscillographic technique. A poor record merely presents an auscultatory problem to the eye instead of the ear and nothing is gained. The spectral phonocardiogram seems to be the weakest when precise timing of events is crucial because the standard reference tracing, the electrocardiogram, is almost invariably blurred. This may be due to a technical defect in one of the several stages of the technique. If it can be remedied and the detail of the sound recording improved, spectral phonocardiography may well fulfil the author's prediction of becoming the method of choice in this field.

### OBSTETRICS

By SIR EARDLEY HOLLAND. Pp. xiv + 1228, illustrated. London: William Heinemann, Medical Books Ltd. 1959. 147s.

This book, like its companion work on gynaecology, is designed for postgraduates, be they those working for higher degrees or those carrying out postgraduate practice of obstetrics either in hospital or in general practice. It is, however, not a complete guide to practical obstetrics in the way that books reserved for operative obstetrics are. It is a work, that in 41 chapters, authoritatively and thoroughly deals with the theory, as well as the practice, of every part of obstetrics from the physiology of conception through the care of the pregnant woman, the management of her labour and puerperium, to a discussion of the kindred subjects of obstetrics and psychology, and obstetrics and the law.

If the chapter on Caesarean Section is singled out because of the occasional beauty of its English,

the fluency of its style, the fullness of its information, and the fairness of its comparison of statistics from different sources, it is not because it is necessarily the best chapter in the book. It comes from the Liverpool school and, for this edition has been written by Mr. C. J. K. Hamilton, who revised the late Charles Macintosh Marshall's chapter.

I particularly liked, too, the original approach of Mr. Ian Jackson to Maternal Injuries and Dystocia due to deformities of the foetus.

Each chapter is written by a man who has made that particular part his special interest.

The illustrations are superb, the references at the end of each chapter are extensive and by and large, most of the writing is easy to read. Where there are something like 35 authors contributing to a book, obviously there is some unevenness in the style of writing throughout the book, but the editing of Sir Eardley Holland has been skilful enough to smooth out most of this unevenness and to avoid, as far as I can see, any useless repetition.

This textbook, together with the one on gynaecology, would probably today represent the sum total of the reading necessary by the candidate for the M.R.C.O.G. examination. In fact, I should say that if he had read both these books completely from cover to cover, he would not need to turn to any other book, except possibly for revision to a more basic and smaller textbook. Once more, William Heinemann Ltd. are to be congratulated on the excellence of their production, which is a credit to British publishing.

### BIGGER'S HANDBOOK OF BACTERIOLOGY

By F. S. STEWART, M.D.(Dublin), F.R.C.P.I.  
7th edition. Pp. x + 611, illustrated. London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox. 1959. 37s. 6d.

Professor Stewart has succeeded in giving us one of the best textbooks for medical students that has been published since the war. Earlier editions of Bigger's book were first class, but it has not been possible to use it recently, as so many fundamental changes have taken place in microbiology in the last 10 years.

In rewriting, the old scaffolding may have been used, but so much of the material is fresh that it is virtually a new book with the outlook and personality of its present author impressed on it. It is clearly the work of an experienced teacher and every page is furrowed with the efforts to decide what can be best left out. I was particularly impressed by his courage in excluding the formulae of media and similar minutiae. At the same time he indicates the important ingredients in a medium and gives detailed instruction for its use in diagnosis.

Another outstanding virtue is that new discoveries and observations have been neatly fitted into the text as brief references, even though in some cases the papers from which they were taken can only have been heard at scientific meetings at

the time that the book went to press. It must be unprecedented for a textbook to contain reports of papers with later dates of publication than its own.

For the technician this book will not take the place of 'Mackie and McCartney'; it does not contain enough technical detail. Criticism on these lines could be met by providing appendices on formulae and technical methods, but, on the whole, I think this would be a mistake. The advanced worker will enjoy reading this book, but will not find that it relieves him of the need to refer to 'Topley and Wilson' or to 'Bergey' for detailed information either on the botany of organisms or the epidemiology of diseases.

Stewart achieves what he sets out to do: he gives a clear presentation of bacteriology for medical students, emphasizing the important principles and excluding all the detail that can safely be left in the reference books.

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### PRACTICAL OBSTETRIC PROBLEMS

By IAN DONALD, M.B.E., M.D.(Lond.), F.R.C.O.G.  
2nd edition. Pp. xvi + 712, illustrated. London:  
Lloyd-Luke (Medical Books) Ltd. 1959. 55s.

This is a nice, friendly book: it is also a very useful book and especially so for the postgraduate practitioner of obstetrics, whether he be working in hospital or whether he has a large obstetric list in general practice.

The outstanding chapter, as would be expected from Professor Donald, who has done so much original research on the subject, is on the resuscitation of the newborn.

One thing the reviewer cannot understand is, when an author has such felicity of style as Professor Donald undoubtedly has, that he should ask other collaborators to write even short chapters for him on subjects that are well within the scope of anybody actively in practice in obstetrics. These chapters by outside collaborators—and there are only three or four of them—are not quite up to the standard of the rest of the book. The book is written in a somewhat conversational style, which makes it far easier to read than if it had been written in a lecturing style. I should say it has obviously been dictated rather than written by hand. That adds to its length, but also greatly to its readability.

Every practical obstetric problem that can arise is dealt with and, although there are already two good books on practical obstetrics in the English language, they are much larger in size and scope than this one and much more expensive.

The reviewer would say that this is probably *the* book to have by one's side to turn to for day-to-day handling of obstetric problems and the larger books should only be used by the postgraduate mainly as a reference.

The publishers, incidentally, should be congratulated on the excellence of the presentation. The print is beautiful and the book handles very well.

### THE BRITISH ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF MEDICAL PRACTICE

**Medical Progress and Cumulative Supplement**  
Second Edition. Pp. 395. London: Butterworth & Co. Ltd. 1958. 35s.

Medical Progress, apart from being an important and necessary up to date addition to the 12 volumes of the Encyclopaedia Proper, possesses the added advantage of providing a concise account of the most important current advances in medicine, surgery and their main specialities. This volume can therefore be strongly recommended as a useful addition to the library of Practitioners, Postgraduates and Specialists who do not actually possess the Encyclopaedia.

Part I of Medical Progress consists of articles on general medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology by well-known contributors. The importance and complexity of modern anaesthesia is indicated by a contribution of greater length than that on general medicine, while the newest speciality, Aviation Medicine, occupies an important chapter.

A short paper on the new Pharmacopoeia will be welcome in addition to a 30-page account of the recent developments in Pharmacology and Therapeutics which forms Part II of the volume. This well documented section provides more than 200 references.

The reader will find chapters by well-known authors on cardiology, chest diseases, industrial diseases, neurology and paediatrics. There are useful accounts on congenital heart disease in children, radiation hazards, virus diseases and pathology. Each chapter offers a good bibliography.

Part III of Medical Progress consists of abstracts with key numbers enabling easy reference to the Encyclopaedia itself.

The Cumulative Index offers the reader all the most recent information on all subjects dealt with in the Encyclopaedia and is an essential annual addition to the major work.

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### HEAD INJURIES

By E. S. GURDJIAN, M.D., and J. E. WEBSTER, M.D.  
Pp. 482, illustrated. London: J. & A. Churchill Ltd. 1958. 100s.

This new book from Detroit is based on the wide experience of the two authors with the clinical, neurosurgical and experimental aspects of head injuries—both civil and military. They are to be congratulated upon the result of their labour for this will become a standard text on the subject.

First there is an interesting chapter on the history of head injuries culled from writings through the ages and then the essential anatomy is reviewed. Next is a chapter dealing with the mechanisms of head injury and here the experimental observations of the authors are recorded. These are absorbing but this chapter might have been shortened as much