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Books

Various Authors

Abstract

- New Aspects of Human Genetics. British Medical Bulletin, January 1969.
- Tile Eye in General Practice (5th. Edition) by C.R. S. Jackson. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. 30/-.
- Recent Advances in Pharmacology (4th. Edition). Edited by Robson & Stacey. J. & A. Churchill, London.
- Body Fluids in Surgery (3rd. Edition) by J. Wilkinson. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd.
- The Logic of Medicine by D. A. K. Black. Oliver & Boyd Ltd. 7/6d.
- A Manual of English for Overseas Doctors by Joy E. Parkinson. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd.

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BOOKS

New Aspects of Human Genetics. British Medical Bulletin, January 1969.

The B.M.B. is published tri-annually by the Medical Department of the British Council; each volume consists of a series of articles by acknowledged experts on growing points in selected fields and this volume is no exception. It would seem presumptions to criticise such a journal and one can simply give an indication of the range of material covered.

The articles in this issue consider many aspects of human genetics, from 'Enzyme and Protein Polymorphism in Human Populations' by Professor R. H. Harris, to 'Genetics of Common Disorders' by Dr. C. O. Carter. Inborn Errors of Metabolism are well covered from a number of aspects, as are chromosome abnormalities. Two of the articles on cytogenetics are written by experts from the Edinburgh M.R.C. Unit on clinical and population cytogenetics: 'Human Population Cytogenetics' by the late Professor W. M. Court-Brown and Mr. P. G. Smith, and 'Structural Abnormalities of the Sex Chromosomes' by Dr. Patricia Jacobs. The Bulletin also includes discourses on the genetic aspects of haemoglobinopathies, the porphyrias, blood-groups, autosomal imbalance, mosaics and chimeras, and reciprocal translocations.

All of these articles contain very concise, highly concentrated information, couched in the jargon of each speciality. This is definitely not bed-time reading, but more reference material for those with a specialised knowledge of, or keen interest in, human genetics. Not a volume for the average medical student unless he has a great enthusiasm for the subject.

S.J.U.

The Eye in General Practice (5th. Edition) by C. R. S. Jackson. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. 30/-.

Without doubt, this book fulfils very adequately the need for a concise textbook of ophthalmology for the general practitioner. In particular it emphasises the need for urgent attention to certain disorders and stresses the dangers of indiscriminate use of local steroids.

Dr. Jackson's book is also most suitable for the undergraduate's first steps in ophthalmology, being sufficiently short and readable to satiate the student's interest without overtaxing an appetite already curbed by pressure of other specialities. However, the student will have to supplement his reading by attention to colour slides of ocular conditions and by examining as many patients as possible, for there are only 44 figures (including but 6 fundal photographs). It is appreciated that a book costing only thirty shillings cannot possibly contain large numbers of photographs, but the priorities for inclusion are somewhat incongruous. The presence, for example, of a photograph of a conjunctival mole and two essentially similar pictures of both synechiae and aene rosacea, at the expense of any diagram of the mechanism of glaucoma or nasolacrimal obstructions.

This latest edition contains one less figure and about ten changes in the text. The most significant of these are a section on welder's flash, an extra paragraph on the implications of aphakia, some aspects of modern treatment of detachment and emphasis on the urgency of treatment of temporal arteritis by systemic steroids in order to prevent loss of sight.

Despite minor criticisms, this book is to be highly recommended.

D.McL.

Recent Advances in Pharmacology (4th. Edition).
Edited by Robson & Stacey. J. & A. Churchill,
London.

Since the production of the third edition of this review, in 1962, pharmacological research has accelerated explosively, both within the narrow discipline, and, divergently, towards other scientific fields. It is therefore a particularly pleasant surprise to find that the 4th. edition retains the essential quality of its predecessor — the concise, yet comprehensive and vital, presentation of relevant material. This has been achieved by inviting experts to contribute articles on current work in their particular fields. As a result the chapters are of a uniformly high standard, and yet presented with individual emphasis.

The most casual glance — and the material deserves much more — indicates at once the potentially wide appeal of the book. Aspiring toxicologists will appreciate the many illustrations of the metabolic pathways of drugs. The relationship of the clinical significance of calcitonin and gastrin to the study of their basic physiological rôles is clearly shown. Professor Horton accounts enthusiastically the rapid development of prostaglandin biochemistry (honours pharmacology students please note!). Although the biomathematics of drug-receptor interaction is patently for the expert only, the pharmacology of the central nervous system, the subject of so much study, is abbreviated to 80 pages of introductory reading for the senior student of physiology or pharmacology.

The section on immuno-suppressive drugs seems too brief, and there is nothing of oral contraceptives or drugs of dependence. However this is small criticism of a textbook which

admirably succeeds in lucidly dovetailing basic knowledge with future possibilities. The popularity of this book can only increase.

J.P.

Body Fluids in Surgery (3rd. Edition) by J. Wilkinson.
E. & S. Livingstone Ltd.

This invaluable book which is recommended to students at Dundee Medical School, is a clear concise account of the normal and abnormal in clinical chemistry. The first half of the book contains the physiological mechanisms used by the body in control of a dynamic milieu interieur. Ionic equilibrium and buffer systems are illustrated by simple explanatory diagrams.

The remainder builds on the first few chapters and discusses the effects of stress due to loss of fluid, injury and disease in the adult and child. The final chapters give a brief summary of the diagnostic criteria in fluid and electrolyte imbalance including the drugs and fluids available for their correction.

Dr. Wilkinson's lucid and understandable account of this complicated subject results in a book that should appeal to a very wide readership.

C.M.L.

The Logic of Medicine by D. A. K. Black. Oliver
& Boyd Ltd. 7/6d.

Employing a semi-scientific format, as with fertilizing scientific writing with choice references, serves a genuinely useful purpose of reference or merely adds authority to platitude. As one reads further into this book several questions come to mind. Who was it written

for? Why was it written? Returning to the preface we find Professor Black stating "In talking to scientists and educationalists, I became conscious that they are unaware of the exacting challenge which medicine offers to the intellect".

Is this the reason? To convince the rest of the intelligentsia that doctors think and that science has finally permeated through to them. Certainly, even for the first year student, this paperback has little medical appeal. For the layman? The intelligent layman? Perhaps enjoyment of the quasi-medical. Perhaps a little insight — but not much.

A.I.D.

A Manual of English for Overseas Doctors by Joy E. Parkinson. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd.

The Royal Commission on Medical Education said of overseas medical students in its report that 'many lack a quick understanding of the idioms, allusions and variations of intonation used by patients, or in lectures, demonstrations and seminars, although they can cope quite well with social conversation or a medical text'.

Miss Parkinson therefore wrote this book — a very small paperback one — to provide aid for such people. On first opening it the English student might be rather amused — but let him not be so proud — he should read it carefully. There are words and expressions in the colloquial English section which I have never heard before and some which I have heard for years and of which I have never known the significance until now. It is such a good idea to include the sort of phrases which some of one's patients are likely to use, which are not always strictly polite and, at times, incredibly vulgar.

There are sections on letter writing, Medical abbreviations and several examples of patient-doctor dialogues. All very useful for the foreign student, who will also find the chapter on the language of drug addiction of great interest. This discussion makes fascinating reading for many of us, foreign or not, who are not already drug addicts.

This is an excellent book, thoroughly recommended for overseas students, and for the indigenous medical population.

W.D.L.M.

AFTER VAGOTOMY

Edited by J. Alexander Williams, Ch.M., F.R.C.S., and Alan G. Cox, M.D.(Sheff), F.R.C.S.(Ed.).

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