A Guide to the Study of Ear Disease. By P. McBride, M.D.

Edinburgh: W. & A. K. Johnstone.

Taken as a whole, we would be inclined to characterise Dr. McBride's book as one of the best introductions to the study of the subject, if not the best, that has lately appeared in this country. In calling it an introduction we notice that the author himself characterises it as such, both in his preface and at the beginning of his first chapter, and it seems almost a pity that he has chosen the more ambitious title of a guide, for the book seems to lack the completeness and fulness of detail that we find in the larger works on ear disease.

The first chapter of the book is taken up with consideration of points in the anatomy and physiology that are of most practical importance to the aural surgeon: even while recognising that we should not expect in it a minute anatomical description of the ear, or the physiological facts or theories in full detail, still thirteen pages of large print seem all too little to treat even of the points referred to, and we are apt to think the chapter "scrappy" and unsatisfactory, at times perhaps, because the points are put shortly and distinctly. We may also draw attention to the anatomical illustrations at the end. In plate I, we have represented four dissections from different view points of the middle ear, printed in colour. These four plates, however artistic they may be considered, do not give a clear view of the parts, and the explanations under each are decidedly meagre; we doubt if any one who has seen the parts in reality would compare their value with that of a good wood engraving. While we notice this as another failure of coloured lithographs or chromos to depict anatomical specimens, we may point out that the other plates, which perhaps from their nature may more readily lend themselves to this treatment, are good and likely to be useful. A and b in plate V and b and c in plate VI, appear to be specially good, and in the representation of the normal membrana tympani and in that of the thickened membrane with patches of opacity, the artist has been quite as successful as in any book that we have seen containing such illustrations.

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This notice would be of undue length if we were to remark on the various chapters in detail, but we may mention that on Chronic Suppuration of the Middle Ear and its Complications, that on Disturbance of the Nervous System resulting from Ear Disease, on Tinnitus Aurium, and that on General Diseases which affect the Ear, as not only giving a clear idea of the subject in hand, but as being suggestive both as to treatment and as to the probable etiology.

Throughout the book we find distinct statements as to the strength of solutions and of other materia medica recommended—an important detail frequently omitted in larger and more pretentious works.

We were rather surprised to see that Dr. M'Bride recommends the trial of a solution of acetate of lead when there is a discharge of pus through the drum membrane: but in this instance he does not give the strength of the solution, so we may hope that he has not been in the habit of using lead in such cases. At least, since Hinton wrote condemning the use of lead in otitis media, we thought it was generally recognised that in ulcerative processes in the ear, as it doubtless is in similar cases in the eye, the use of lead was to be avoided, as it tends to form a deposit that in the one may clog parts that should be movable, and in the other obscure parts that should be transparent.

In concluding this notice we take the liberty of making a rather long quotation from the chapter on Chronic Suppuration of the Middle Ear, because we feel sure, if laid to heart by practitioners generally, it would go far to prevent the miserable results we often see from a disease that is most amenable to treatment in its early stages.

"This affection is often set down to struma. It is more than likely that scrofula plays an important part in preventing the action of the vis medicatrix naturae, but it also must be remembered that an ulcerated discharging surface may be enough to account for the presence of enlarged glands, which may then caseate, and lay the seeds of tubercular disease. Chronic middle ear suppuration is peculiarly apt to give rise to complications (e.g., granulations and polypi, mastoid disease, caries, pyaemia, cerebral abscess).

"The patient is often brought to the surgeon on account of a 'running ear,' or perhaps more frequently on account of a bad smelling discharge which annoys those who are brought in contact with the sufferer. Often these cases have been long neglected, and if asked for an explanation, the statement is generally made by parents or patient that it was considered
dangerous to interfere, or even that the otorrhœa was believed to be salutary by the family physician. Apropos of this subject, Roosa naively remarks that the Creator would have made us with discharging ears if they were necessary for our well-being. Any one who notes the histories of a number of cases of neglected ear disease—suppurative or otherwise—will find strange revelations as to medical ethics. The observer will meet with patients incurably deaf, or perhaps the victims of caries of the temporal bone, threatening life itself, as a result of disease curable in its early stages. Such patients will often tell how the doctor was consulted, and how in one case they were told that the discharge was beneficial, or in another that the deafness would disappear at puberty. From no line of argument founded on rational data of pathology could such conclusions be arrived at, and I hesitate to apply the proper epithet to such empirical statements and prophecies coming from medical men in whom patients place confidence."

The Medical Annual and Practitioner's Index: a Yearly Record of useful information on subjects relating to the Medical Profession. 1883-84. London: Henry Kimpton.

This is a remarkable gathering together of facts which may be useful to the medical practitioner, and is intended to lie on his table for ready reference. It commences with short notes, giving the essence of the more important contributions to the medical journals in the past year. These are followed by a notice of some of the inventions of the year, some particulars of the health resorts of Great Britain, France, Germany, and Austria; sanitary memoranda, and a concise account of the medical schools, universities, and licensing bodies, with particulars of the nature of the examinations, and the dates on which they are held. Next come jottings as to the medical societies in the metropolis and the London hospitals, and a gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland, "showing the population, distance from London, number of practitioners, hospitals, dispensaries, medical and scientific societies, lunatic asylums, &c., in the most important towns in Great Britain." This is followed by a medical, official, and trade directory, a summary of the Medical Act Amendment Bill (1883), and facts and figures on such widely diverse subjects as consultations and digestion, assistantships and antidotes; weights and measures, postal information, books of the year; new drugs, private asylums, hygienic homes, nursing institutions, and a list of