NEW BOOKS

The History of Pediatrics. By George Frederic Still, M.A., M.D.(Cantab.), Hon. LL.D.(Edin.), F.R.C.P.(Lond.). Pp. xviii + 526, with 63 illustrations. London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. 1931. Price 25s.

A short notice can do but scant justice to the merits of this learned and delightful history of paediatrics by Professor Still. The book gives an account of all the important writings on diseases of children from Hippocrates to the end of the eighteenth century. It is an expansion of the Fitzpatrick Lectures on medical history given some years ago at the Royal College of Physicians, London; and its preparation must have entailed immense labour, not only in the study of all the important medical books on the subject, but in arduous researches by the author in contemporary general literature and Church records. It is scholarship of the first order, both in the patient labour of its preparation, and the charm and interest of its presentation. Biographical notes and portraits of the authors are given, with long extracts from their writings, and with many facsimile illustrations of the frontispieces and texts of old and rare books.

It is interesting and satisfactory to note that Dr Still gives Scotland an honourable place in the development of the subject in the eighteenth century. Patrick Blair, who probably hailed from Fife, seems to have given, in 1717, the first description of congenital hypertrophy of the pylorus. Robert Whytt, certainly a Fife man, Professor of Medicine in Edinburgh University and President of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, wrote the first description of tuberculous meningitis: this is described by Dr Still as “a masterpiece of clinical observation, the finest first description of a disease that had yet appeared.” Lastly Dr George Armstrong, born at Castleton, Roxburghshire, and brother of Dr John Armstrong the poet, established in 1769 in Holborn, London, the first “Dispensary for the Infant Poor,” the forerunner of the first hospital for sick children in Britain opened about the middle of the next century at Great Ormond Street.

In writing this book, Dr Still has joined the select band of medical historians who have practised their art and written its story with equal distinction.

Cancer and Race: A Study of the Incidence of Cancer among Jews. By Maurice Sorsby. Pp. xvi + 120. London: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson, Ltd. 1931. Price 7s. 6d.

Cancer and Scientific Research. By Barbara Holmes. Pp. viii + 160. London: The Sheldon Press. 1931. Price 3s. 6d.

These two books relate to the same problem. The first is addressed by a medical man to his colleagues in the profession.
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and to other students of the subject; the second is primarily intended for the lay reader. Both merit the attention of all who wish to rid their minds of fallacious arguments concerning this important matter.

It was inevitable that a morbid condition of such vital significance to all sections of the community should invite the speculation of many untrained thinkers, and that owing to the vast amount of uncorrelated data arising from research, false doctrines should become prevalent concerning the nature and etiology of malignant disease. Dr Holmes has achieved, with conspicuous success, the difficult task of presenting the salient facts to the lay reader in an intelligible form, and her book could do much to destroy superstitious beliefs and fears. In a preface to this volume Sir Gowlard Hopkins expresses the opinion that the lay mind will at present derive more benefit from studying the causes of cancer than the methods of cure, and with this we entirely agree. Cancer is essentially a disease to be prevented, a fact well recognised by those who urge the importance of propaganda with a view to the earlier diagnosis of pre-cancerous states, and intelligent members of the public might be more ready to respond to such appeals if they appreciate the grounds upon which they are based. This question of prophylaxis leads directly to a consideration of the inferences to be drawn from Dr Sorsby's findings. His investigation was concerned with the relative incidence of cancer among Jews and non-Jewish members of the population in various cities where a large Jewish colony yields material for such a comparative study. The data presented has been collected with extreme care, and every possible precaution has been observed in estimating the significance of the statistical material obtained. It is a book for careful study, for if it can be shown that in the case of the Jews a differential incidence of cancer is indeed a racial attribute the doctrine of hereditary or familial predisposition receives strong support. On the other hand, if a relative immunity or susceptibility can be traced to a peculiarity in the environment it becomes necessary to re-examine the hypothesis that there are racial or familial characters predetermining the development of malignant disease. The results of Dr Sorsby's investigation permitted him to conclude that among the Jews the mode of living is of primary importance, and that a racial immunity to certain forms of cancer does not exist, the low incidence being directly related to a strict observance of the Mosaic Law. It is impossible, in the space available, to discuss the reasons for this inference, but the reader cannot fail to be impressed by the cogency of the author's argument. Such a conclusion provides strong support for the views expressed in the preface to Cancer and Scientific Research, for it is evident that personal hygiene and discipline and observance of
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physiological laws can prevent the development of precancerous states not only in theory but in practice.

Practical Radiation Therapy. By Ira I. Kaplan, B.S., M.D., Director, Division of Cancer, Department of Hospitals, New York City. Pp. 354, with 227 illustrations. London and Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, Ltd. Price 27s. 6d.

This volume presents the principles of radiation therapy and the methods employed at the Bellevue Hospital, New York, in a concise and systematic manner. The author wisely makes no attempt to describe all the techniques already published; he is content to record his own methods, these methods having been adopted as a result of his own experience. The first part is devoted to the principles of treatment and its value is much enhanced by the chapter on applied X-ray physics by Dr Carl B. Braestrup. Then follows a detailed description of the technique adopted for the treatment either by X-rays or radium of those conditions which are known to be responsive. A large number of illustrations showing the clinical condition before and after treatment, serves to show the value of the technique recommended. A short chapter on diathermy gives some indication as to the value of this current in the treatment of malignant lesions. Finally a section is devoted to the organisation and equipment of the Radio-Therapy department of a general hospital: this will prove a considerable help to those who have to initiate such a unit.

Surgical Emergencies in Practice. By W. H. C. Romanis and P. H. Mitchiner. Pp. 608, with 158 illustrations. London: J. & A. Churchill. 1931. Price 18s.

The purpose of this volume is to present the essentials of emergency surgery in compact form suitable for the busy practitioner, and there can be no doubt that this object has been satisfactorily achieved. Most of the chapters appear to have been extracted verbatim from the authors' work on general surgery, and consequently the book possesses all those attributes that have popularised the larger work. No attempt is made to discuss the pathological side of the subject, but the clinical features and differential diagnosis are described well, and the methods of treatment to be adopted are clearly indicated. As befits a book of this character, the whole approach is dogmatic rather than judicial, and throughout there is evidence of broad experience and well-balanced judgment. One has the impression that this is the work of practical surgeons with a clear idea of the needs of the practitioner.
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Few criticisms are possible, and these are only directed to minor defects which will no doubt be rectified in subsequent editions. In the section on injuries in the elbow region there is no reference to the special danger of so-called ischaemic paralysis, nor is this affection described elsewhere in the book. That other complication of injuries at the elbow, myositis ossificans, also receives scant mention. In the chapter upon diseases of the appendix the obstructive type of legion does not seem sufficiently stressed, in view of its now well-recognised importance.

The illustrations are clear and informative, with the single exception of Fig. 93, which might well be omitted. The whole production of the book is of a high standard.

Recent Advances in Forensic Medicine. By Sidney Smith, M.D., and John Glaister, jun., M.D. Pp. 194, with 66 illustrations. London: J. & A. Churchill. 1931. Price 12s. 6d.

The authors of Recent Advances in Forensic Medicine are to be congratulated on having produced such an interesting volume. By including some recent advances in other branches of scientific criminal investigation and a detailed description of the precipitin test for blood, they have given us a book which will be of considerable use to those engaged in this work. Firearms are coming more and more into prominence in homicidal cases, and an examination of the weapon, bullets, cartridges and powder may afford vital evidence; the authors have dealt with this examination very fully, and this section of the book will be invaluable as a reference to those engaged in such investigations. The examination of hairs and the principles of blood-grouping are dealt with in an excellent manner; the important part that the latter is to play in future forensic practice can readily be appreciated, and many authors claim that even now it has reached the stage when it can be relied upon to give conclusive evidence. The other subjects dealt with are the precipitin test, estimation of carbon monoxide in the blood, detection of metals by the spectroscope, uses of ultra-violet light and the estimation of alcohol in the blood and urine. With the exception of the last mentioned, these are all of practical value and an adequate description is not readily available elsewhere. Crime is of such general interest that it behoves every medical man to have some knowledge of the methods by which science endeavours to keep ahead of the criminal, and in this interesting and well illustrated book he has the means ready to his hand. As a book of reference the lawyer and laboratory worker will find it of practical value.
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Clinical Examination and Surgical Diagnosis. By Felix Lejars, Professor of Clinical Surgery in the Faculty of Medicine, Paris. Translated by Helen C. Scott, M.R.C.S., F.R.C.P. Pp. 872, with 1094 illustrations. London: Jonathan Cape. 1931. Price 50s.

Lejars' earlier work on Urgent Surgery will be remembered as a brilliant piece of clinical work, so one expects much from his latest contribution and there is no disappointment. This work presents a thorough system of bedside examination.

The chapter on the breast, and the section on conditions of the right iliac fossa, are particularly instructive. Lejars finds it useful to examine the right iliac fossa with the patient lying on the left side, and has on occasion detected a retro-caecal appendicular abscess in this manner. He describes four different appendicular points, each with a special name and separated from one another by a fraction of an inch. Little is gained by this meticulous exactitude, in fact, the reader is rather confused.

The book is readable and interesting, partly owing to the many case histories included, and partly to the excellent translation. The illustrations, particularly the radiograms, though numerous, are not quite so good as one would expect in such a work.

Chill, Its Dangers and Prevention. By Marion Thornett, F.R.C.S.I. Pp. xiii + 194, with several illustrations. London: J. & A. Churchill. 1931. Price 3s. 6d.

Those concerned with the treatment of "disease" are coming more and more to appreciate the importance of the study of disordered physiology in the living human subject. We believe that, from this point of view, the unprejudiced consideration of the contents of the present volume will be found well worth while, although (or perhaps because) the views it expounds run in many respects counter to ideas still widely held by the public and the medical profession alike.

The author's thesis is well crystallised in Dr Jane Walker's foreward, "A cool dry skin is able to keep the body at an unvarying comfortable temperature, which a warm and especially a damp skin is incapable of doing. ... We wear too many and quite wrong clothes." Many interesting facts and observations are brought forward in support of this view. The book throughout is sane and well-balanced, and, while the evil effects of "coddling" are fully emphasised, artificial and over-sudden "hardening" measures are equally deprecated. It is urged that our habits as regards dress and personal hygiene generally should receive re-consideration in terms of modern physiological knowledge.

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