NEW BOOKS

Biochemistry of Disease. By MEYER BODANSKY and OSCAR BODANSKY. Pp. x+684. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1940. Price 30s. net.

The brothers, authors of this book which is of great interest to clinicians and biochemists alike, have presented their subject in somewhat unorthodox manner. Heterodoxy, however, is usually stimulating, even to the orthodox.

Acting on the legitimate assumption that the physician is interested in biochemical phenomena because of their relation to clinical entities, the authors have presented, systematically, the biochemical aspects of various diseases or groups of diseases—diseases of the blood, the heart, the respiratory tract, the digestive tract, the endocrines, etc. It is a mode of presentation which should appeal to the physician, but which, from the point of view of the biochemist, necessarily involves a certain amount both of overlapping and of separation of cognate subjects; nevertheless he, too, will find a very great deal to interest and instruct him and many new relationships.

The progress of biochemistry has been curiously patchy in relation to medicine; much has been discovered (sometimes incidentally to other work) of the biochemistry of some relatively rare or unimportant diseases, while disappointingly little is known of the biochemical phenomena of many common and important diseases. This necessarily means that a book on the biochemistry of disease tends to be unbalanced from the point of view of the clinician. The authors are aware of this, and, since they have designed their book primarily for the clinician, have been at pains to minimise the imbalance, apportioning their space, so far as the biochemical data permit, in relation to the importance of the clinical entity under discussion.

The result of their efforts is a book which demands no more knowledge of biochemistry than is obtained in the ordinary medical curriculum, and which, building on this foundation, provides an excellent exposition of the way in which biochemistry can assist the intelligent clinician in dealing with the pathogenesis, diagnosis and the treatment of disease.

Synopsis of Materia Medica, Toxicology and Pharmacology. By FORREST RAMON DAVISON, B.A., M.SC., PH.D., M.B. Pp. 633, with 45 illustrations, including 4 in colour. London: Henry Kimpton. Price 25s. net.

Although consisting of over six hundred pages of small type, this book is nevertheless a “synopsis,” embracing as it does materia medica, pharmacology, therapeutics and toxicology, as well as pertinent sections on chemistry and physiology. The author has
succeeded well in his attempt to treat pharmacology as an integral part of medicine, and has produced a book that is essentially clinical in its outlook. The classification of drugs, based on their site of action and therapeutic activity, has proved a happy one, except in a few cases where it involves the scattering of one drug throughout several sections.

The introductory chapters on the basic principles of pharmacology, the different pharmaceutical preparations, and especially the one on prescription writing are all well written, and numerous practical prescriptions are included in the sections on therapeutics. Unfortunately the essentially American make-up of the book limits its use for junior students, as of course all the preparations do not coincide with those of the British Pharmacopoeia, and the section on legislation does not apply to this country. The majority of the numerous references are from American literature.

**Hæmorrhagic Diseases. Photo-electric Study of Blood Coagulability.**

By Kaare K. Nygaard. Pp. 320. Illustrated. London: Henry Kimpton. 1941. Price 28s. net.

This monograph begins with a critical review of methods which have been used for determining blood coagulability, and a detailed account of the author’s own method, one which gives an automatic recording of the changes in the amount of light transmitted through blood or plasma during the process of coagulation. The light changes are measured photo-electrically (the instrument is about the size of a transportable electrocardiograph, and by analogy, is termed a "coagelgraph"). The records obtained with this machine (coagelgrams) have been analysed in relation to the known processes of coagulation, and the author has investigated the effect on them of alterations in the various factors concerned in blood coagulation.

On this basis the author discusses the process of coagulation, and the value of various measurements (e.g. "prothrombin time") commonly used in connection with it. He then reviews the published work on blood coagulability in various types of hæmorrhagic disease and on the rôle of vitamin K, discussing the results he has obtained with the coagelgraph and their bearing on the various abnormalities of coagulation.

Dr Nygaard’s book is essentially a personal one; he presents his own opinions fearlessly; and though his opinions may not all be generally accepted, they are invariably the result of logical argument from the data considered. The mode of presentation, that of an enquirer after truth, is attractive and stimulating—one feels that if one were to discuss, even with opposing views, any of Dr Nygaard’s results, the discussion would be a very friendly one.

This is, to sum up, an exceedingly valuable contribution to the literature of blood coagulation and hæmorrhagic disease.