REVIEWS

The Background of Therapeutics. By J. Harold Burn. Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press. 1948. Pp. 367. Price 22s. 6d.

This is not merely another book on therapeutics, but an attempt to describe the scientific background to recent therapeutic advances. The author is therefore frequently involved in discussions on bacteriology, as in the excellent review on methods of sterilization, and on chemistry, biochemistry, and pathological processes; all of which are in a clear style which is simple and easy to follow.

The author, in the preface, states that the work was undertaken after impressions, gained in America, of the importance placed in that country on laboratory and experimental work, and their value in improving diagnosis and treatment. He has used mainly British work as his basis, and has provided many British references in the hope that "Americans may learn of some of the work done in this country which ought to be more widely known." His approach to clinical research, which shows a full understanding of laboratory methods, will be found very acceptable to pathologists. It is clearly impossible to cover all the modern views on many varied subjects in 340 pages, but the condensation is on the whole admirably done. There are, however, several chapters which may well be recast in a future edition. The order of chapters might with benefit be arranged, so that disinfection, for example, is not squeezed between thyroid and allergy. The compound chapters are not all suitably chosen; for example a chapter dealing with plasma proteins and their place in cirrhosis of the liver ends up with the treatment of heart failure with digitalis.

There is an excellent half-chapter on iron metabolism, and it is hoped that in a new edition this will become the basis of a discussion on the therapeutics of the anaemias, instead of ending with a short discourse on calcium metabolism. The outstanding omission is, in fact, the absence of a review on blood and blood products in therapeutics, particularly as so much work on these subjects has been done in this country.

Clinical pathologists will be delighted to find, in a

book written for clinicians, so many of the recent advances in investigational and experimental pathology which will give their colleagues an appreciation of the newer trends involving laboratory investigations, many of which will in the near future be in everyday demand in the control of modern therapeutic measures.

A. GORDON SIGNY.

Catalogue of Medical Films. Compiled by the Royal Society of Medicine and the Scientific Film Association. Published by ASLIB, 1948. Price 7s. 6d.

Those of us who know anything of the history of this jointly compiled catalogue have impatiently awaited its appearance. Now that it is available many will appreciate it and will realize that a document of this nature has been much needed in the past.

In this booklet are to be found the titles of some eight hundred films of medical interest, and although a good deal of space is devoted to an elaborate cross-indexing of these titles the net result is that films may be located numerically, generically, or alphabetically. In addition to this, details are given of some two hundred of these films: such details, however, are descriptive and not critical. This is perhaps disappointing, but the difficulties in the way of adequate appraisal must be considerable. It seems that we have not yet reached American standards in this respect; the American College of Surgeons have already laid down some criteria of medical film appraisal. Critical review, however, sometimes discourages the previewing of films by the teacher himself: this in turn leads to misuse and then to discredit.

The majority of those who refer to this work will be amazed at the wide choice of subject material, and it will now seem as easy to arrange a programme of films for an informal meeting as to select a single available film for the illustration of a specific lecture.

R. J. V. PULVERTAFT.

ASSOCIATION OF CLINICAL PATHOLOGISTS

COMPETITION FOR THE DESIGN OF A PATHOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

The Association invites entries from interested individuals (e.g., pathologists, technicians, architects, and others) for this competition. Entries by two or more competitors jointly, will be permitted. The essay should include a description and plans for a department of pathology to serve a population of 200,000 to 300,000, and providing: clinical pathology for an "area" or "group" hospital and for general practitioners of the area, including domiciliary service; bacteriology for authorities in public health.

The following subjects and aspects of work should be surveyed: clerical and record services; amenities for patients and staff; bacteriology; biochemistry; haematology; morbid histology; morbid anatomy (including coroner's work and comprising post-mortem

room and mortuary, not necessarily within the same building as the rest of the department). The competitor should describe and give detailed plans of type of building and layout of accommodation and should consider light, heat, ventilation, other systemic services, and the attributes and type of material used in building and in internal fixtures and fittings.

There will be first, second, and third prizes of respective values £50, £30, and £20. The competition will remain open until May 1, 1949, by which date all entries should have been sent to the Hon. Secretary, Association of Clinical Pathologists, The Royal Infirmary, Worcester. The plan will remain the property of the competitor, but a copy of the plan and the accompanying essay will remain with the Association.