

Book reviews

AUTOPSY PATHOLOGY By Philipp R. Rezek and Max Millard. (Pp. xiii + 845; 294 figures. \$24.50.) Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. 1963.

It would appear that in some parts of America there has been a tendency in recent years to discredit the value of post-mortem examinations and one of the aims of 'Autopsy Pathology' is to counteract this trend and to promote the restoration of pathological necropsy. The book is intended to help, not only pathologists, but also clinicians in the interpretation of necropsy findings and to assist them in understanding the causes and mode of death.

The first chapter deals with death and dying and one is left with the impression that our knowledge of the mechanisms involved is still very incomplete. The problem of sudden death is discussed but consideration of medical-legal aspects is not attempted.

Under the heading 'Morgue Organisation' there are suggestions for the design and equipping of mortuaries but there is no mention of precautions which should be taken against infection in the post-mortem room.

There is a reasonably detailed description of the points to be observed in the external examination of the body. This is followed by an outline of how a necropsy report should be framed but the busy pathologist would find it difficult to adhere strictly to the somewhat elaborate scheme recommended.

The regions of the body are discussed in turn and the same general arrangement is followed in each. Any anatomical considerations that may have a bearing on pathological changes are mentioned and there is guidance on the removal of the organs from the body and on their subsequent dissection. These descriptions vary in the amount of detail given but are generally adequate, although the reviewer failed to find the instructions on the removal of the thoracic organs *en bloc* which, it is stated in the section on dissection of the heart, are to be found elsewhere. Occasionally the order in which the systems are considered confuses the reader, *e.g.*, the dissection of the trachea is discussed before that of the oesophagus although the oesophagus is, in practice, opened first. Then follow sections on the pathology of the various diseases affecting each organ of the region; a description of the naked-eye changes is given but findings on microscopy are not considered. The emphasis is on the commoner and more important conditions but the less common are also mentioned. Useful advice is given on special points to be looked for and on the significance of the changes seen.

The authors have combined in the writing of each chapter and the result is that the book has a uniform style which is easy to read. A selected list of references has been included; many of these are to recent publications and an appreciable proportion are from British sources. The illustrations are clear and informative and the index satisfactory. The volume is well produced.

Although the book is not one which can replace

standard works on pathology it contains useful information not often found together in one volume. It is, however, not inexpensive.

P. D. STEWART

IRON METABOLISM By Thomas H. Bothwell and Clement A. Finch. (Pp. 440; illustrated. £5 7s. 6d.) London: J. & A. Churchill. 1962.

This book, written by two leading workers in the field, is the most lucid and up-to-date account of iron metabolism now available. Anyone concerned with the more difficult problems of iron deficiency or iron overload needs to read this book and to have it available for reference.

The two clinical chapters are at the end and deal with iron deficiency and iron overload in 134 pages which omit nothing of importance, and are notable for the simple and straightforward exposition of the many factors involved. Even rarities such as idiopathic pulmonary haemosiderosis and the sideroblastic hypochromic anaemias are clearly analysed.

The first two chapters deal with techniques, cytological, chemical, and isotopic, and the information which they can provide. Chapters on the factors affecting iron balance, on iron transport, storage and utilization, and on the production of erythrocytes follow, and provide the backdrop against which the clinical chapters are to be read. Though in some ways more complicated, these chapters are just as clear as are the clinical chapters.

This book is also a pleasure to read. The literary style is not distinguished, but it is simple and clear so that it should be easily understood by those whose language of the hearth is not English as easily as by those who speak English from the cradle.

GEORGE DISCOMBE

CENTRAL STERILE SUPPLY Published for the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust. (Pp. xiv + 123; 54 figures; appendices and plans. 25s.) London: Oxford University Press. 1963.

The central sterile supply system is now being widely adopted in Britain following the work of V. D. Allison and E. M. Darmady. British hospitals have special problems and opportunities in this field and there is need for a British treatise about it. This book answers that need. It is based on work in the experimental department at the United Cambridge Hospitals but also embodies observations from elsewhere. Being about a rapidly advancing subject, it inevitably is not wholly up to date nor free from some details for criticism. Nevertheless, it is a valuable work and gives a comprehensive, clear, and well-illustrated account of organization and technique. Many matters are dealt with, including accommodation, apparatus, work-flow, cost, transport, the wrapping and contents of packs, and sketch plans of existing and projected departments in various hospitals. Reasons for adopting particular methods are often stated, and even if

the reader disagrees with some, he will benefit from considering the alternatives. This book is strongly recommended.

W. A. GILLESPIE

POISON DETECTION IN HUMAN ORGANS By Alan S. Curry. (Pp. xxi + 150; 17 tables; 7 text figures. \$6.75.) Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1963.

This is a book for the hospital as well as for the forensic laboratory written by the Principal Scientific Officer of the Home Office Forensic Science Laboratory, Harrogate. Its emphasis is on the detection of poisons by the most rapid and simple methods available. Up to date and concise, it not only gives advice to the specialist toxicologist on the systematic chemical testing of each organ in a comprehensive analysis but it also provides just the kind of information most useful to the clinical pathologist faced with an urgent decision between poisoning and disease in the unconscious patient or at necropsy.

The introductory chapter, which includes advice on the collection, packing, and preservation of samples, is followed by a most useful chapter describing spot tests on blood and urine and other tests of value in the living patient, including the extraction of poisons soluble in organic solvents for which no simple spot tests are yet available. For a long time we have needed a battery of rapid tests for the detection of the commoner poisons in the living and at the difficult necropsy when, for example, there is no clinical or morphological evidence of poisoning and yet the degree of morbid change, *e.g.*, coronary stenosis, leaves one in some doubt as to whether it is the true cause of death. Now, with the help of the spot tests described in this chapter, together with the one of rapid tests for barbiturates published recently (Curry, 1963; Wallenius, Zaar, and Lausing, 1963), any hospital laboratory should be able to diagnose the majority of cases of poisoning in a couple of hours. The analysis of the contents of the alimentary tract is described in detail in Chapter 3, most of which is equally applicable to the analysis of stomach washings from the living.

In a comprehensive post-mortem analysis, after carrying out the simple spot tests, the reader is advised to turn to the four tests on liver tissue described in the first part of chapter 4: in this way those common poisons for which there are as yet no simple spot tests can be most quickly detected. Tests on other organs and further analyses on blood and urine are then detailed.

There are occasional misprints; these are no doubt inevitable in a new book. Those in the last two urine spot tests in Table 6 on page 49 are worth mentioning. In the test for bromide, '50% fluorescein' should read: 'saturated alcoholic solution of sodium fluorescein'; and in the test for p-amino-phenol, 'add 2-3 drops 1% NaOH and alkaline α naphthol' should read: 'add 2-3 drops 1% NaNO_2 and 1 ml. of an approximately 1% solution of α -naphthol in 10% NaOH'.

My only real criticism is the price of so short a book. It seems most unfortunate that it was published in America and not here as a paper-back at a fraction of the cost, for it would be a valuable addition to the library of any hospital laboratory.

GREGOR GRANT

Curry, A. S. (1963), *Brit. med. J.*, 2, 1040.

Wallenius, G., Zaar, B., and Lausing, E. (1963), *Scand. J. clin. lab. Invest.*, 15, Sup. 69, 252.

LABORATORY TESTS IN DIAGNOSIS AND INVESTIGATION OF ENDOCRINE FUNCTIONS Edited by Roberto Escamilla. (Pp. xiv + 514; 135 figures; 89 tables. 78s.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1962.

This well-produced book is based upon a course of postgraduate lectures given at the University of California. Judged by the description of the posts held by the many contributors, it is based upon the experimental observations of a group of younger investigators who are actively engaged in the work they describe. This leads to a refreshingly direct text which is easily read and comprehended. They give an up-to-date account of the present state of knowledge of this branch of medicine, and they are clearly busily attempting to expand this knowledge.

There are seven sections—pituitary, thyroid, parathyroids, pancreatic islets, adrenals, testes, and ovaries. Each section is introduced by a pathologist, who outlines the tests that are currently available to the clinician for the diagnosis of disorders of that particular endocrine gland. These are followed by a number of lectures devoted to the measurement of one or more functions of that organ.

The introductory lectures will be of particular value to the clinician as they summarize, although somewhat sketchily in places, the very important part that the laboratory must play in the diagnosis of these not uncommon diseases; those on the parathyroid and the testes are particularly good.

The subsequent chapters contain a considerable amount of laboratory and clinical data derived largely from investigations on healthy and diseased human subjects. The laboratory methods employed vary from the simplest, such as the determination of plasma electrolytes, to those using specialized techniques only just beginning to find their way into the routine laboratory, *e.g.*, gas chromatographic, immunological and radioactive tracer methods.

Each chapter is followed by a most useful list of references, many of them to papers giving practical details of the tests discussed. These lists alone make the book a compulsory addition to the library of routine laboratories where the investigation of endocrine disorders is carried out.

Some criticism can be levelled at the text since it is presented from transcripts of the lectures as delivered, rather than as articles written for the reader. This does not, however, detract from their value, and any initial irritation should soon be overcome by the amount of clearly presented information.

This book can be recommended to all who are interested in this fascinating subject, be they clinician or clinical pathologist.

HAROLD MILLER

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

Would intending contributors please send all communications to the Editor, *JOURNAL OF CLINICAL PATHOLOGY*, Dr. A. Gordon Signy, addressed to him at B.M.A. House, Tavistock Square, W.C.1.