REVIEWS

An Atlas of Bone-Marrow Pathology. By M. C. G. Israëls, M.Sc., M.D., M.R.C.P. William Heinemann Medical Books, Ltd. Pp. 50. 12 plates. Price 30s. net.

Bone Marrow Biopsy. By S. J. Leitner, M.D. Translated by C. J. C. Britton, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H., and E. Neumark, M.B., B.S.(Lond.), M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. J. & A. Churchill, Ltd. Pp. 433. 7 plates. 194 text-figures. Price 42s. net.

Bone marrow biopsy has become one of the accepted routine investigations carried out in the wards and often in the out-patient departments in most hospitals. It is used in the diagnosis and control follow-up of many conditions, particularly, of course, in haematological disorders.

There has long been felt the need for an authoritative book and atlas, and there was in particular an opportunity for a prominent haematologist to give a clear lead on the nomenclature and classification of the cells seen in smears and sections from bone marrow biopsy. This necessity has been intensified by the recent suggestions for an agreed international terminology and even more, as Israëls recently said, for a clear-cut description of the cells which we call by the new or old names. There is, for example, no international agreement on the term "megablast." Israëls, therefore, in the introduction to his book proclaims his intention "to set out an authoritative, accurately illustrated account of the bone marrow in health and disease, for the guidance of physicians and pathologists." This intention is unfortunately not fulfilled, as indeed it could never have been, in a book of only 50 pages and 12 plates. It does, however, provide a non-controversial introduction to the subject, and as such will be read and appreciated by physicians and by students who will thereby be enabled the more easily to understand the pathologists' reports. The colour drawings are excellent and do give a clear and firm description of the cells described. A minor source of annoyance could be remedied in future editions if the interleaved pages with contour sketches of the plates 8-12 were omitted. It is very difficult to keep a picture of a microscopic field and pick out cells for identification as is intended in these plates, when the process involves unnecessary procedures of number identification on an intermediate sheet and the key on yet another page. The plates 1-7 are so much easier to follow that the tracings should be regarded as superfluous.

For the pathologist who requires an authoritative reference book Israëls will be quite inadequate, and so it was with even greater expectations that the book by Leitner was received. This book has essentially a clinical outlook and throughout there are numerous illustrative case histories which are valuable. The translators were faced with two problems: one to provide an easy translation, which they have in the main achieved, although the rather stilted style in places is evidence of their difficulties; and the other to attract British readers with a book which had to be made not too obviously Continental in outlook. The senior translator admits his previous intention to undertake a similar book on his own account, and he has compromised by incorporating many British and American references to avoid another publication. This volume will almost certainly become a standard textbook in Great Britain and it can be assumed that the licence that the translators have been allowed will continue and even be extended so that later editions will contain a greater proportion of works with which we are more familiar in this country. On the whole the photographs and plates are good, but it is most disturbing to find such a variety of magnifications used in the photomicrographs. Magnifications of 50, 100, 120, 150, 500, 600, 650, 750, 1,000, 1,050, and 1,400 are used, and frequently several on one page. In fact, the only magnifications which are really satisfactory are the 1,000 and the 1,400, and many of these are really excellent, whereas some of the smaller ones—e.g., on pages 359, 115, and 159—are merely a collection of black cells without meaning. The photomicrographs should be carefully scrutinized before the next issue.

The other major criticism is the number of references. Although this book can well claim to be a reference book it is really quite unreadable in parts because of the intrusion, line after line, of meaningless names and dates. This can best be appreciated by the fact that throughout the chapter on erythropoiesis there are 1,180 references which also occupy 15 pages at the end of the chapter. It can be confidently assumed that the book would not suffer if this number were to be reduced to a quarter.

In our last issue we published an admirable review by Dacie and White on bone marrow biopsy, with special reference to erythropoiesis. This review was widely appreciated, and, with the two books here reviewed, should provide a very solid basis for the better understanding of the bone marrow in health and disease.

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