

Book reviews

SYSTEMATIC PATHOLOGY VOLS. 1 AND 2 By G. Payling Wright and W. St. C. Symmers. (Vol. 1 Pp. xv + 1022; illustrated. 320s. Vol. 2 Pp. 1022-1675; illustrated. 320s.) Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd. 1966.

This outstanding new British book of systemic pathology is bound to make a profound impact on the pathologists and medical students of our generation. It combines the classic approach to pathology with a very modern outlook and presentation which makes both reading and reference work easy and pleasurable. Because of the size of the work it is produced in two volumes.

Tragically, the senior author died while the book was in its earliest stages and his contributions are, therefore, limited to an opening chapter on the heart and a chapter written jointly with Dr B. E. Heard on the lungs. The second author had to bear the heavy load of responsibility of editing the massive work but found time to write excellent chapters on the lymphoreticular system of the thymus gland and the breast, as well as being part author of the sections on gynaecological pathology. These carry the usual very high standards of illustration which we have come to expect from Professor Symmers. The stamp of the editors is, however, also clearly imprinted on all the contributions. These are of varying degrees of excellence and one or two chapters will need revision and rewriting perhaps more quickly than others. However, this is in a sense a minor criticism because, as we understand it, the aim of the editors was to present the overall picture of pathology as practised today. While pathology and laboratory medicine in general are undergoing such rapid advances, a critic could always find something in his own particular field which he would have written differently or with a slightly varied orientation. The book is as up to date as is possible in such volumes, in spite of the time it has taken to put it together.

Occasionally minor subjects are mentioned in more than one chapter; these discussions do not always agree in detail and different terminology may be used. The value and importance of this book will be assessed, however, by pathologists who take a broad view of the subject and will appreciate what the two volumes offer to the better students and the postgraduate students who are embarking on a career in pathology. They will find a wealth of material which is excellently written, highly informative, and stimulating. For the practising pathologist this is as complete a textbook as is possible without incorporating extensive monographs which he would have to consult. For these the references are liberal and comprehensive.

The illustrations are numerous and excellent. Some are really quite outstanding and there is a fair proportion of electron micrographs. Most pathological lesions can be adequately illustrated in black and white and colour has not been used. Perhaps some of those remarkable stained preparations produced in colour which we are accustomed to expect from Professor Symmers would have enhanced

the histochemical findings but would have added considerably to the cost.

The price may be considered high at £16 but compared with equivalent volumes from the USA this is exceptionally good value for money and is highly recommended.

A. F. SIGNY

A DICTIONARY OF MICROBIAL TAXONOMIC USAGE (University Reviews in Botany). By S. T. Cowan. (Pp. 160. 42s.) Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd. 1968.

The publication of this first book on medical microbial taxonomy in this country is timely. It is the first of a series of university reviews in botany and the plan is based on Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage. Like that book it is informative, readable, and often amusing.

It is primarily a reference book for the taxonomist but there is a great deal of essential information for editors of scientific journals and all those who contribute to the journals. The author's vast experience in all these fields is seen in his selection of material and his personal views on many of the entries. These views are always interesting and will stimulate much discussion.

The dictionary includes the addresses of the major culture collections of the world with their specialties, short definitions of words on the 'fringe' of bacterial systematics, notes on the prominent workers in the field, and explanations are given of the relevant roles of the three codes of nomenclature.

The use of computers in microbial systematics has enlarged the scope of this branch of microbiology and made possible new approaches to the study of taxonomy. The routine microbiologist should not, therefore, be discouraged by the title because all will find it useful and Fowler's 'uneasy half literates' will find it invaluable.

This is a slim, cloth-bound volume; the layout and printing are clear and there are six simple tables. At 42s. it is not expensive.

M. PATRICIA JEVONS

ELECTROLYTE METABOLISM IN SEVERE INFANTILE MALNUTRITION By J. S. Garrow, R. Smith, and E. E. Ward. (Pp. 146. 67s. 6d.) Oxford: Pergamon Press. 1968.

Acknowledging malnutrition to be undefinable and unmeasurable, the authors, from the Medical Research Council Tropical and Metabolic Research Unit in Jamaica, confine themselves to measurable fluids and electrolytes. The book consists chiefly of tables and discussion of the world's literature on malnutrition and it is often difficult to know when they are referring to others' or their own data. Their conclusions and recommendations for dealing with dehydrated undernourished children have long been accepted good paediatric practice in Britain. This volume is likely to be of most use as a critical introduction to the assessment of body fluids and electrolytes in ill children.

J. L. EMERY