Book reviews

Cardiomyopathy and Myocardial Biopsy. Edited by M. Kaltenbach, F. Loogen, and E. G. J. Olsen. (Pp. xv + 337; illustrated; £15.66.) Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer-Verlag. 1978.

Although cardiomyopathy is no longer an uncommon diagnosis the definition as heart muscle disease of unknown etiology still applies. This book, which appears to be based on a symposium, aims to present an up-to-date account of recent developments in this field. Most contributions relate to the primary forms; there are also papers on hypertrophy of other causes, experimental cardiomyopathy, technical aspects and problems of myocardial biopsy techniques together with a large section on angiography and non-invasive diagnostic procedures. All but three of the 46 contributors are from Germany, and the editors are to be congratulated on the fact that this is in no way apparent in their texts. The papers are mainly short, clearly written, and well illustrated.

The place of myocardial biopsy is still being debated, and the editors conclude that although the procedure may be useful for prognosis its main value is in research, and its general application is not justified.

The book probably offers little of immediate relevance to most readers of this journal since the pathological emphasis is predictably on ultrastructure. However, those working in centres where myocardial biopsies are performed or under consideration will undoubtedly find it of interest.

ARIELA POMERANCE

Clinics in Endocrinology and Metabolism. 'Thyrototoxicosis'. Volume 7, Number 1. Edited by R. Volpé. (Pp. vii + 243; illustrated; £8.25.) Eastbourne: W. B. Saunders. 1978.

The 12 articles in this book contribute yet another excellent volume in this now well-established series of Clinics in Endocrinology and Metabolism. The sections are well written by acknowledged experts in their subject. All except one are from North American centres.

The emphasis is on new advances in thyrototoxicosis, particularly with regard to the chapters on pathogenesis, humoral

immunity, genetics, and molecular mechanisms at the tissue level.

Rare differences in approach between the two continents are inevitable, such as in the performance of a TRH test (p. 111), but overall the chapters on endocrine ophthalmopathy and the diagnosis and treatment of thyrototoxicosis due to different aetiologies are well-balanced and sound.

Finally, the editing is excellent so that unnecessary repetition has been reduced to a minimum.

Endocrinologists, general physicians, and chemical pathologists will benefit from reading this book.

S. M. SHALET

Forensic Medicine: A Study in Trauma and Environmental Hazards. Edited by C. G. Tedeschi, W. G. Eckert, and L. G. Tedeschi. In 3 volumes. (Pp. 1680; illustrated; £65.00.) Philadelphia, London, Toronto: W. B. Saunders. 1977.

The basis of this immense work is the premise that forensic medicine is concerned primarily with medical problems and their interrelated legal issues, particularly concerning trauma, and 91 contributors have produced, to their considerable credit, an encyclopaedic account of medical, forensic, and para-forensic knowledge.

Volume I on medical trauma has some unnecessarily long chapters on orofacial and musculoskeletal trauma and a superb account of explosive injuries. Volume II on physical trauma is a miscellanea of injuries due to chemical agents with facets of toxicology and serology, indifferent accounts of all forms of transport injuries, and a comprehensive review of thanatology. The third volume on environmental hazards surveys injuries occurring in industry and agriculture and those due to therapeutic and anaesthetic misadventure, and considers microbiological infections, parasitic disease, and lesions due to poisonous fish, snakes, and plants.

The hazards of multiple authorship are all too apparent, and the distinguished editorial board minus alas the founder editor, Dr Tedeschi senior, must take responsibility for this state of affairs. There is an untimely apposition of unrelated subjects, an unnecessary separation of closely related ones, a failure to incorporate

minor but important subjects into the main text, and, additionally, a deficiency of basic forensic pathology exemplified by scant reference to abortion, the asphyxias postmortem changes, and the timing of death, and no definitive contribution to toxicology. This remarkable reference work, and it can be nothing less, has a fine bibliography but is maimed in many places by poor photographic reproductions with lengthy explanatory captions. Unless our colleagues are 'big spenders' they will rely on a library to purchase this work but it contains a wealth of scientific and medical information unobtainable in a single work elsewhere.

D. A. L. BOWEN

Essays in Medical Biochemistry. Volume 3. Edited by V. Marks and C. N. Hales. (Pp. ix + 152; illustrated; £4.50.) London: The Biochemical Society and Association of Clinical Biochemists. 1977.

This volume consists of four essays on widely divergent themes.

The first, by Dr I. Chanarin, explores the complex relationships between folate and B₁₂, drawing attention to the large unexplained differences found in man and animals on the one hand and congenital and acquired deficiencies in man on the other, leaving the reader with the challenge of problems unresolved and perhaps another co-enzyme still to be found.

Of great topical interest to both clinician and biochemist is the essay by Bagshaw and Searle on tumour markers. They bring reality and experience into a rapidly expanding field, which has suffered much in the past from the inadequately informed enthusiast.

The greater clinical emphasis of this volume compared with its predecessors is evident, and the third offering, by J. R. Holton, is on diagnostic tests in amniotic fluid. This is another rapidly developing area in which much confusion exists. The essay is both practical and informative, providing the reader with a clear picture of the potential, the advantages and disadvantages of utilisation of amniotic fluid for diagnostic purposes.

The final essay, by Marks and Turner, reviews the changing status of the gastrointestinal tract as an endocrine organ, paying particular attention to the role of gastrointestinal hormones in the main