McClung's Handbook of Microscopical Technique. Edited by Ruth McClung Jones. 1951. London: Cassel & Co., Ltd. 3rd ed. 157 plates. Pp. 790. Price 90s.

Pathologists are, unfortunately, becoming only too conscious that the reference books which they would like to own are issued at a price that is prohibitive. *McClung's Handbook* is of established value, and perhaps institutional libraries at least ought to afford a copy of the new edition, the first published after the original editor's death.

It contains much that the histologist and haematologist in particular cannot find conveniently in other textbooks; there is a particularly full chapter on polarized light and electron microscopy, and a useful but brief treatise on phase contrast, in which the kind of lamp needed is not adequately stressed. Radio-autographic technique and dental histology are fully discussed. Quotations from non-American literature are few; the paper curtain perhaps excludes them. The volume comprises, however, a very fair balance between a record of tried methods and an account of new research weapons.

In a book published at this price it is unfortunate that certain pages should be out of sequence.

R. J. V. PULVERTAFT.

La Talassemia. By G. Astaldi, P. Tolentino, and C. Sacchetti. 1951. Pavia: Biblioteca "Haematologica." No. XII. With 69 illustrations. Pp. 229. Price Lira 2,500.

"Thalassaemia," an expressive if philologically unfortunate neologism, is becoming accepted in haematological literature as a term embodying both the fatal haemolytic anaemia of Cooley and the less severe hereditary Mediterranean target cell anaemias described in recent years in Italy and the United States. There seems little doubt that both disorders are expressions of the same underlying gene mutation and that a fatal outcome occurs in homozygous individuals,

whereas in heterozygotes the condition may range from clinical silence to a severe anaemia with skeletal changes indistinguishable from those found in the true "Cooley" type. The disease is widespread along the Mediterranean littoral and in people of Mediterranean stock in other countries. Changes thought to be characteristic of it have been discovered in skeletons dating from palaeolithic times. Thalassaemia is thus of interest to the haematologist, the geneticist, and the historian, and in their monograph Astaldi, Tolentino, and Sacchetti have assembled most of the known facts about it. This excellent book contains a full review of the literature—the great bulk Italian—good accounts of the clinical and haematological features of the disease, and a résumé of much of the authors' original work designed to elucidate its precise pathogenesis. Their conclusion, drawn partly from accurate studies of the bone marrow and of bile pigment metabolism, partly from tissue culture experiments, is that the primary lesion of thalassaemia lies in an increased destructibility of the abnormal erythrocytes, with a consequent shortening of their life span and a compensatory hyperplasia of the marrow erythroblasts. The weakness of the argument lies in the lack of direct evidence for a shortened survival of the erythrocytes. Such evidence has recently been produced by DeGowin's group by means of cross-transfusion experiments, and it has also been suggested that this does not fully account for the anaemia which is more likely secondary to a partial haemopoietic arrest of the marrow. These additional findings amplify the value of Astaldi, Tolentino, and Sacchetti's results.

The book is well produced on good paper. The illustrations, especially the photomicrographs, are of the high standard customary in Italian publications. There is a useful if somewhat unidiomatic summary in English and a very extensive list of references. This is a work which should be available to everyone interested in the study of the haemolytic anaemias.

F. W. GUNZ.