Reviews

BLOOD GROUPS

Blood Groups in Man. By R. R. Race, Ph.D., M.R.C.S., and Ruth Sanger, Ph.D., B.Sc. (Pp. 290. £1 10s.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1950.

Ostensibly, blood groups and clinical medicine have been living together harmoniously for some 40 years. However, the discovery some 20 years ago that there were human blood groups (M, N, and P) of negligible importance in clinical medicine was a warning sign that the ways might part sooner or later, though the discovery of the Rh groups at first suggested that after all the subjects might develop most rapidly if they worked together.

Since then great efforts have been made by both sides to pretend that their interests are really the same. This has led to great concessions by clinicians. Clinical pathologists have struggled first with CDE, then with C^w, D^u, and E^u. This book should persuade them that the time has come to abandon the chase. It is useless to pretend any longer that what is interesting and even fundamental in the field of blood groups is necessarily of the slightest interest in clinical medicine.

It may come as a shock to some clinicians to find that it is possible to write a really first-class book on blood groups without giving any definite description of a compatibility test. This omission seems entirely proper in a book which is not written primarily for clinicians.

From now on the clinical pathologist with a special interest in blood groups must recognize that he cannot aspire to more than amateur status in the subject. His daily work requires a knowledge of only small, disconnected parts of it. Acquaintance with the phenotype Le(a− b−) is no more important to him than a knowledge of the rarer poisonous fungi. On the other hand, to the geneticist each blood-group system is of approximately equal interest.

This book is written by two people who have done more than any others to advance this subject in the last few years, and therefore every worker in this field should study it closely. However, this will prove far from being a burden to anyone: the whole work is enlivened by a discreet gaiety and is the easiest possible reading.

There are very few criticisms to make. It is a little surprising to find that haemolysis by anti-Rh sera—a phenomenon very difficult to demonstrate—is mentioned twice, whereas α and β haemolysins are not mentioned at all. The authors have been a little too respectful of some published work. It is unavoidable that a good many bad papers have been published on blood groups, and if these are to be quoted the reader should be given some clear indication that the conclusions are open to doubt.

These are very minor reservations. The book will save blood-group workers untold hours of hunting through the literature. Even more important, it will make them familiar with the methods, statistical and otherwise, which Race and Sanger have used to determine the pattern of so many new blood-group systems.

P. L. MOLLISON.

WATER AND SALT DEPLETION

Water and Salt Depletion. By H. L. Marriott, C.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.P. (Pp. 80. 15s.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1950.

This monograph is a reprint of Dr. Marriott's Croonian Lectures of 1946, which were first published in this *Journal*. The text has been revised to bring it up to date. He sets out, in the lucid, dogmatic fashion we have come to expect of him, the main facts of salt and water metabolism, with the causes and effects of the body's depletion of each separately and of the two combined. The diagnostic and therapeutic precepts which follow are simple and practical and have already established their value.

Dr. Marriott has clearly made valuable use of his wartime experience in India, and there are few points at which anyone will cavil. No comment is made on the view, held by many, that the urinary excretion of chloride after operation and injury bears little relation to the plasma levels, and that the Fantus test is a fallacious guide to treatment in such cases. His suggestion that salt depletion aggravates pyloric stenosis by superimposing pylorospasm is interesting and explains the unexpected improvement which sodium chloride will often bring about in these patients. His insistence on the prior claim of the oral and rectal routes for administration of fluid is salutary in these days of uncritical intravenous medication.

With this little book in their hands, the junior residents, upon whom, to Dr. Marriott's distress, the management of salt and water depletion so often devolves, will be well equipped to meet these emergencies.

R. BODLEY SCOTT.

MICROSCOPIC DIAGNOSIS OF MALARIA

Studies from the Institute for Medical Research, Federation of Malaya. No. 23. The Microscopic Diagnosis of Human Malaria. Part I. A short descriptive atlas of thick-film diagnosis. By John W. Field. Illustrated by Yap Loy Fong. (Pp. 116; illustrated. No price.) Federated Malay States: Institute for Medical Research. 1948.

In the early days of malaria research technique was practically restricted to making the wet blood film, a delicate operation not to be attempted except in the seclusion of the hospital ward. Later with increasing convenience and usefulness came the dried film, watery Romanowsky, Leishman stain, and Giemsa. But meanwhile more and more was demanded from the malaria research officer. There came the increasing use of the "thick film" with its added difficulties in interpretation, "counts" were required for certain kinds of work, diagnosis of the parasite became increasingly more important as drug treatment became more precise and specific, and in wartime examination of blood films had to be made on a very large routine scale. Many beginning such work found there were troubles and difficulties to be surmounted, and advice of the detailed and practical nature required was not easy to get.

This helpful publication is designed to meet just such needs. Dr. J. W. Field has set out in the simplest and most direct manner, and in full detail with copious illustrations, a description of practical requirements in the making and examination of blood films by the malariologist. After a brief account of the forms and appearances of the malaria parasites and points regarding parasitaemia and other matters of importance in the examination of the blood in malaria, there is a chapter on the thick film and one on interpretation of