

Pathology Reviews

Principles of Pathobiology. Ed. Mariano F. LaVia, and Rolla B. Hill, jun. (Pp. 281; £3.25) Oxford University Press. 1972.

Although pathobiology is apparently "a science integrating cell biology and classical pathology, encompassing normal processes of growth, metabolism, and biologic interaction, and the effects of external and internal injuries on these processes," this book consists of six reviews by one Finnish and seven American pathologists of what we would call basic pathology.

They are good reviews and well illustrated. In particular the one on inflammation puts current knowledge about permeability

factors, chemotaxis, and the fate of leucocytes into perspective more clearly than can be found elsewhere. The section on cell injury and cell death is also comprehensive and well organized, showing clearly where knowledge is at present lacking. Host-parasite interaction and immunologic injury are also very readable, but the chapter on neoplasia is more pedestrian. The part of the book on heredity, differentiation, and development, although distinguishing between genetic and non-genetic biological variation, becomes rather esoteric with the Lesch-Nyhan syndrome as an example of an X-linked recessive disorder, and is better done elsewhere.

Despite its soft covers this volume is

moderately expensive. It is intended "to provide an anchor in modern biology for the student of pathology and an anchor in pathology for the student of biology," and to be useful in medical and dental schools "where pressures have forced the adoption of a limited 'core' curriculum in general pathology." In the English system it is probably most suitable for students revising for first or higher degrees who can profitably select parts of it along with selections from other books to obtain a relief map of our present ideas about disease, how they developed, the evidence for and against them, and where hypothesis stands in for evidence.

W. F. WHIMSTER

The Ills of Affluence

The Biology of Affluence. Ed. George Smith and John C. Smyth. (Pp. 126; £1.95.) Oliver and Boyd. 1971.

This interesting book reports a symposium held by the Scottish branch of the Institute of Biology in Aberdeen. Its distinguished contributors include the present and two past directors of the Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen, one of whom, the late Lord Boyd-Orr, supplied the foreword. All the papers reach a high standard, and deserve careful study south of the border and indeed throughout the world.

Affluence, it appears, particularly affects the fields of sociology, nutrition, toxicology, and pathology, and can have both good and bad results. Thus medical studies made in a world of increasing affluence have had the good effect of increasing longevity, but have also resulted in the much feared "population explosion." Sir Dugald Baird drew attention to the increasing tolerance for overt sexuality among both married and unmarried, and stressed the need for increased efficiency in the practice of birth control. In a paper on man and his environment, R. C. Garry pointed out that external pollution can arise from the foul

air of monstrous conurbations, and internal contamination from cigarette smoking. The influence of wealth on the consumption of different kinds of food was commented on by K. L. Blaxter, with particular reference to the increased intake of broiler chicken and quick frozen vegetables and decreased intake of bread and flour. Processing and packaging could be expensive luxuries, increasing the price of some proprietary breakfast foods to 20 times the price of the raw material from the farmer. According to J. Hawthorn the regulations for food packaging and processing had become so detailed and complex that only specialists could keep conversant with them. The safeguards against chemical food poisoning by the components of covering materials and the ink for labelling them seem excessively stringent when one reflects that only two or three cases of chemical food poisoning have been reported for every 10,000 cases of bacterial food poisoning which the wrappers can prevent.

R. L. Richards suggested that two features of affluence, warm housing and good eating, had produced a remarkable change in the pattern of heart disease in Scotland. Between 1920 and 1966 deaths from valvular heart disease fell from 3,000 to 689, but deaths

from ischaemic heart disease rose from 229 to 14,472. The effects of affluence on the atmosphere, causing the deaths of some 4,000 Londoners during a fog episode in 1952 was recalled by one speaker, and unauthorized dumping, particularly of detergent wastes and pesticides such as D.D.T. and dieldrin, was discussed by another. Substantial amounts of these are found in mussels in the Clyde estuary. Loss of amenities and scenic beauty, however, are equally to be regretted. The genetic injuries which could be caused by food contaminants and radiations, the complicated social and political implications of affluence, and the situation of old people who no longer tend to end their days by living with their children, were all seen to be part of the problem of the affluent society. Sir David Cuthbertson, the last contributor, ranged over the many facets of affluence in the world setting. In his opinion much of the rebellion of youth today was against the state of mind produced by affluence. Man had to learn not only how to produce a world of plenty, but also how to control himself when surrounded by material and facilities which were greatly in excess of his reasonable needs.

T. MOORE

Encyclopaedia of Arrhythmias

Clinical Disorders of the Heart Beat. 3rd edn. Samuel Bellet, M.D. (Pp. 1,271; £23.60.) Henry Kimpton. 1971.

This must be one of the most comprehensive works on arrhythmias ever to be written. With its 1,271 pages, 470 illustrations, and innumerable references to the literature, not to mention the weight (over 3 kg) and price, it is at first sight a forbidding volume. However, the excellent arrangement of the material, the pleasant and easy style of writing, and the author's clearly great personal experience save it from being just a dull warehouse of facts. About half the book is devoted to a straightforward presentation of the various arrhythmias and this is followed by sections on general diagnostic procedures, arrhythmias in certain clinical states, drug therapy, and other procedures in therapy. Frequent box-form summaries provide very useful revisions of the lengthy text.

The 10 years that have elapsed since the previous edition have made it necessary to rewrite most of the chapters and extensively to revise the others. Examples of this modernization include the management of myocardial infarction, artificial pacemakers, electric countershock, His bundle electrograms, and chapters on new drugs such as bretylium and the beta-blockers. Older subjects are not neglected, and it is interesting to find that the mechanism of human atrial flutter is still undecided between circus movement and unifocal stimulation, and that the prognosis of atrial fibrillation in "normal" hearts is not yet established. The difficult subject of extrasystoles is dealt with well and includes a good review on the significance of exercise in their production or abolition. However, there is virtually no discussion of quinidine syncope, the value of digoxin plasma level assay is inadequately presented, and one would have welcomed a fuller presentation on overdrive suppression

of arrhythmias.

The illustrations of electrocardiograms, with few exceptions, are well done and clearly annotated. But it seems a pity that so many are mounted vertically, instead of across the page, because this makes reading unnecessarily tedious. To balance this, the quality of the printing and paper and the clarity of the type-faces are first class. The weight is a real burden and a two-volume edition would be better were the price not already deterringly high.

The more I read this book the more I liked it. While its encyclopaedic nature inevitably makes it more informative than educative, it really does contain such a mass of material not easily to be found otherwise that I believe all cardiac centres will find it to be a welcome and important addition to their library. Dr. Samuel Bellet has earned our warm thanks for his single-handed performance of a monumental task.

A. HOLLMAN