

Reviews

ATLAS FOR DERMATOLOGISTS

Atlas of Histopathology of the Skin. By G. H. Percival, M.D., F.R.C.P.Ed., A. Murray Drennan, M.D., F.R.C.P.Ed., and T. C. Dodds, F.I.M.L.T., F.R.P.S. (Pp. 494; 376 photographs in colour. 75s.) Edinburgh: E. and S. Livingstone. 1947.

Owing to its accessibility, it is easier to make microscopical preparations to illustrate morbid conditions of the skin during the lifetime of the patient than of other bodily organs. Moreover the numerous morbid conditions that may affect the skin make possible a wide variety of microscopical pictures. A comprehensive atlas of the histology of skin diseases might therefore be an enormous undertaking were it not that the clinical picture is often more distinctive than that revealed on microscopical examination, for it is not uncommon for eruptions presenting different clinical appearances to show very similar histopathological changes.

The authors have produced a very good book. There are 370 figures, almost all in colour, the first group illustrating the normal skin and its appendages in about 20 figures, the remainder constituting a fairly complete atlas of cutaneous histopathology, and including figures of most of the important animal parasites common in the British Isles. The authors have not included any figures of the pathogenic fungi, although there are illustrations of the pathological changes which these fungi cause. This atlas, a product of the Edinburgh School, illustrates British dermatology, and the authors, who have been assisted by many British dermatologists, have barely drawn upon the rich material provided by the Tropics, but there are illustrations of several of the tropical skin-infesting insects and of Oriental sore and leprosy.

We may question whether colour photography is yet able to yield illustrations equal to those provided by the artist skilled with pen and brush. In this volume the colour illustrations have been made by the Finlay process, which is generally admitted to be the best method of reproducing colour photographs, and though the illustrations are as good as any we have seen, this process is yet far from perfect. It appears to accentuate the blues and purples unduly and to attenuate the reds. Most of the sections illustrated here were stained with haemalum and eosin and the Finlay process does not appear to do justice to them, in some instances giving them a muddy appearance. On the other hand the definition of those (not so numerous) prepared with iron haematoxylin and the van Gieson process is clearer, and the sections prepared to show elastic tissue are also good. One of the best illustrations—figure 20—shows nerve fibres impregnated with silver ending in a Meissner corpuscle.

The authors have accomplished a difficult task with skill. As they themselves say, this work is not intended for the general medical public but primarily for those interested in the specialty of dermatology, and every dermatologist should study it. The general pathologist, however, will find it useful in helping him to solve his occasional dermatological riddles.

H. HALDIN-DAVIS.

GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY

Group Psychotherapy. Theory and Practice. By J. W. Klapman, M.D. (Pp. 344. 21s.) London: William Heinemann (Medical Books). 1946.

During the war the necessity of treating large numbers of patients suffering from not very deep-seated psychoneuroses led to renewed attempts to practise group therapy. This had been tried in the 1914–18 war but fell into disuse with the insistence on complete analysis and catharsis of each patient. The author of this book surveys the subject of group psychotherapy and suggests that too much stress may have been laid on the patient's emotions, and that much can be done by encouraging him to use his intelligence. Moreover in group therapy a transference may be obtained to both the therapist and other members of the group, causing an extraverted attitude in the patient, which often arouses his interest and makes him desire

individual therapy when that is necessary (as it generally is) in addition to group therapy.

Lectures can teach the patient the nature of his illness, and discussion by the group of anonymous case histories, often of members of the group, may give him some insight into his own condition. These methods are suitable for treating groups of mild schizophrenics in mental hospitals; and groups of patients with other types of mental illness, out-patients or even private patients, may be organized. Some authorities favour set lectures; others discussions, psychodrama, or puppetry; and play therapy with children is commonly practised. The author stresses the advantages of group therapy among mothers and children. Patients often enjoy this form of group intercourse and continue it after discharge from hospital. The groups should usually be of 7–10 persons, but some therapists lecture to large audiences. The book includes a schedule of lectures as well as the author's impressions of results; accurate statistics are difficult to obtain. This book is worth studying by all concerned with the treatment of mental illness, especially in institutions.

R. G. GORDON.

OPHTHALMOLOGY

Principles of the Contact Lens. By H. Treissman, F.R.C.S., D.O.M.S., and E. A. Plaice. (Pp. 88; 40 illustrations. 10s. 6d.) London: Henry Kimpton. 1946.

L'Ophthalmologie Du Praticien. By A. Cantonnet. (Pp. 172; 85 figures. 100 francs.) Paris: Librairie Maloine.

Principles of the Contact Lens is the first monograph on this topic with which an ophthalmic surgeon has been associated, and the account is therefore more strictly clinical than those that have come from opticians. The authors devote about a third of their short study to the historical and optical aspects of the contact lens, and then discuss the value of contact lenses in neuroparalytic keratitis, trichiasis, macular lesions, ptosis, symblepharon, and pemphigus of the conjunctiva in addition to the more widely recognized uses. They describe two types of contact lens—the ground glass lens and the moulded glass lens—and mention plastic contact lenses towards the end of the book. The clinician should find particularly helpful the chapters dealing with the preliminary test, buffered solutions, and tolerance.

The second book is one of the "Petits Précis" series, edited by Dr. Cantonnet. It is a remarkably complete summary of elementary ophthalmology and contains some matter not generally found in similar volumes, such as a fairly full account of binocular vision, the Cantonnet-Nouet alphabet for the blind, and a section on ocular hygiene. The author discusses treatment rather dogmatically and sometimes differs from the practice in Britain.

ARNOLD SORSBY.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

Your Guide to the National Health Service. A Manual for Patients, Doctors, Civil Servants, Hospital Officers, and other Health Workers. By A. David Le Vay, M.S., F.R.C.S. (Pp. 78. 3s. 6d.) London: Hamish Hamilton Medical Books. 1946.

Though this book is said to be for doctors as well as for others interested it is doubtful if the former will find it very helpful, for, as the author indicates, the Act is merely a skeleton awaiting the flesh of Regulations; and most doctors who have studied it have found a good deal wrong with the skeleton. However, though the author is a convinced believer in the Act and its consequences, his book is worth reading; much of it is factual, and the style is clear and pleasant. Mr. Le Vay is aware that opinions may differ and his criticism is fair.

We may take exception to a few points: for example, why has the author paraded once more that platitude about the buying and selling of practices, which, he says, is "equivalent to the buying and selling of patients"? No one who has bought a practice in an area served by several doctors could make such an assertion except under the influence of political propaganda. It is stated emphatically that "the doctor will not be the servant of the State." Is this not playing with words? There is nothing derogatory about working in such a service, though most doctors would prefer to be employed