

## Reviews

### FORENSIC MEDICINE

*Practical Forensic Medicine.* By Francis E. Camps, M.D., and W. B. Purchase, C.B.E., M.C., M.B., D.P.H. Foreword by H. Edmund Davies, LL.B., B.C.L. (Pp. 541; illustrated. 75s.) London: Hutchinson's Medical Publications Ltd. 1956.

This book represents the active collaboration of a medical practitioner and a barrister who is also one of H.M. coroners. Since they are both highly experienced, practical men, it is to be expected that something good would result from their co-operation. The reader will not be disappointed. The first occasion, I think, on which such a combination occurred was in 1823 when Paris and Fonblanque wrote a three-volume treatise on medical jurisprudence. That work was rightly acclaimed as an elaborate and scholarly production. Since that date, although lawyers have contributed to several publications, there have been few if any examples of close co-operation between the two professions of law and medicine in the preparation of a textbook.

This book by Camps and Purchase makes excellent reading, although the space allotted to different subjects is very uneven. The article on identification, for example, which is very good, takes up about an eighth of the book excluding toxicology, whereas the sections dealing with the medico-legal necropsy, the examination of blood, semen, hairs, fibres, etc., are much too brief. Similarly, in a most informative article on the barbiturates, with a wealth of interesting cases, there is little if any advice about the treatment of a case of poisoning due to a barbiturate, and no instructions about how to wash out the stomach. The absence of an index is a defect which should be remedied in the next edition. The book is excellently printed and bound and is a credit to the publishers. It should be in the library of all those interested in forensic medicine. Its usefulness to the general practitioner in an out-of-the-way place and who is not likely to have more than one book on the subject is not so clear.

SYDNEY SMITH.

### SCIENCE AND CRIME

*The Scientific Investigation of Crime.* By L. C. Nickolls, M.Sc., A.R.C.S., D.I.C., F.R.I.C. (Pp. 398 + xiii; illustrated. 50s.) London: Butterworth and Co. (Publishers) Ltd. 1956.

The author of this book is the director of the forensic police laboratory at New Scotland Yard and has drawn on a vast experience of forensic work to produce a book which is informative, instructive, and eminently readable.

"Contact traces" is an expression frequently used to indicate the trail which a criminal may leave on his surroundings, or which the surroundings may leave on the criminal. The most obvious example of a contact trace is a fingerprint. There are, of course, many others such as blood, semen, dust of botanical or mechanical origin, and marks made on or by instruments and weapons. In this book the author describes first the lay-out of an up-to-date police laboratory, with an enumeration of the more important apparatus necessary for the identification of contact traces. This chapter will be of great interest to any laboratory worker, irrespective of his specialty. There follows a chapter on the type of material which is likely to be available at the scene of a crime and a description of the various methods of recovery of such evidence, with practical advice on storage and transport. The following chapters deal in detail with the identification of soils, paint, wood fragments, body fluids, and a host of other materials. Further information of a highly technical character is given on such subjects as the restoration of obliterated marks and impressions and the deciphering of damaged and altered documents. A chapter on alcohol determination in blood and urine gives the precise details of the modern methods of such analysis, and in the final chapter

on toxicology the author wisely confines himself to a discussion of the broad principles entailed in the identification of common poisons.

The book is particularly well illustrated with a wealth of photographs and many simple but informative diagrams. In some cases the captions are not sufficiently clear to readers who are not constantly practising forensic science, and recourse to the text is necessary for clarification. The price of 50s. places this book somewhere between an ordinary textbook and a reference book, which is probably its proper place. The author would, I am sure, be the last person to describe his work as a medical textbook. It will, however, be of great value to members of this profession who are obliged to carry out forensic investigations because of the absence of local forensic science laboratories. And, without belittling the book in any way, the numerous amateur detectives in the medical profession will find it most absorbing reading.

DONALD TEARE.

### MENTAL DEFICIENCY

*A Textbook of Mental Deficiency.* First compiled by the late A. F. Tredgold, M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.S.Ed. Ninth edition by R. F. Tredgold, M.D., D.P.M., and K. Soddy, M.D., D.P.M. (Pp. 480 + xv; illustrated. 40s.) London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox. 1956.

It is sometimes overlooked that mental deficiency is a field in which a number of major advances have been made in recent years and in which current views have undergone a great deal of revision, especially those concerned with aetiology and the social aspects of backwardness and defect. Recognition of several new syndromes with a simple genetic determination and of a number of new pre- and post-natal noxae which can disturb the maturation of the nervous system has bitten deep into the formerly large group of "simple amentia," and theories such as those of blastophoria and neuropathic taint have become obsolete in the face of increased evidence of inheritance through single and multiple unitary traits. When A. F. Tredgold's textbook was published in 1908, it documented the accumulated experience of a very original observer, and for many years it was rightly considered the best introduction to the subject. Many of Tredgold's views have stood the test of time, but by the seventh edition the text was beginning to fall behind, some of the case reports and illustrations were not representative of the defective as now seen, and notable new research was not recorded. In the present edition, while much of the original form has been retained the whole text has been revised and the results of new work incorporated without overloading.

The presentation of the subject at the outset is clear and systematic. There is sometimes an unnecessary tendency to preserve the form laid down by the original author, especially in classification, and to ensure that he is still given personal credit for ideas which are by now common property, but with this the reader will readily sympathize. The sections on the pathology and chemistry of defect rather lag behind the rest, and R. F. Tredgold's original drawings of neurones will surely have to be left out or replaced by modern photographs in the next edition, as will a few of the older illustrations. The chemistry of the defective brain is discussed in less than half a page, and the discussion of cerebral function generally lays an almost exclusive stress on the cortex, which is out of keeping with the present interest in basal structures. In spite of this, the more striking new work on neurones, blood vessels, and fibre-systems in defect receives adequate mention. A valuable feature is the attention given to environmental factors and to the special characteristics of the defective psyche in conditions of maladjustment. In a long chapter on disorders of relationship formation the frame of reference and classification are of psycho-analytic origin, but, if the relevance of this may be disputed, the case histories carry conviction and illustrate well the total approach to the defective which is essential if the best use is to be had from his meagre wit. One will be sorry to lose the detailed