

## Reviews

### DISEASES OF THE SPINE

*Modern Trends in Diseases of the Vertebral Column.* Edited by Reginald Nassim, B.M., F.R.C.P., and H. Jackson Burrows, M.D., F.R.C.S., F.R.A.C.S. (Pp. 292+ix+11; illustrated. 75s.) London: Butterworth and Co. (Publishers) Ltd. 1959.

This book is interesting, informative, and an outstanding addition to surgical literature. There are 15 contributors, each writing on a subject to which he has added knowledge during the last 20 years. The articles are well chosen, and the subjects of more than half bristle with difficulties. The anatomy and development of the spine (Walmsley) are concisely described, so as to be helpful to the surgeon. This subject might have been followed with advantage by the article on radiology (Carstairs), for the text and figures of this should be studied before the other chapters are read. Congenital abnormalities (Harris of Toronto) and structural scoliosis (J. I. P. James) are monographs of note. Harris describes clearly the many types of anomaly he has seen, and brings to our notice the neurological symptoms that may be associated with them. Spondylolisthesis—Newman also writes on this—and diastematomyelia are ably described, but many aspects of spina bifida are neglected. The contribution of James is particularly valuable because of his studies of prognosis, and his remarks on treatment makes it possible to appreciate the thought that has been given to improving conservative treatment and to the selection of patients for operation. That surgeons and neurologists have had considerable experience of cervical spondylosis (Logue) is well shown by the lucid description of the condition, but the discussion of the differential diagnosis from conditions below the intervertebral foramina is limited. The paragraphs on the anatomy of the nerve root and root-sleeve fibrosis are excellent.

Both physicians and pathologists make useful contributions to the textbook; osteoporosis is covered by Nassim, and degenerative diseases by Collins, who includes pathological conditions of the intervertebral disk in his article. Tumours are dealt with by Sissons. This difficult subject made it necessary to include the work of others with his own experience. The order in which he considers it is unusual and somewhat confusing. Fortunately, tumours are rare, but it would have been interesting to be given information on tumours of pedicles and vertebral arches, with reference to pressure on the cord, and their prognosis, and also on tumours affecting the sacrum. Hart has been reporting observations on ankylosing spondylitis for some years, and in this textbook he describes the character of the disease and stresses the necessity for a period of observation before arriving at the diagnosis. Tegner discusses symptoms relating to the back of organic and psychogenic origin, and writes on the management of the latter.

The illustrations are well chosen and of high quality, especially in the chapter on degenerative diseases. Although radiographs of the spine are often not suitable for reproduction, those in Carstairs's chapter reach a remarkably high standard. The editors are to be congratulated on this volume, and it is hoped that the surgical editor will make a direct contribution when a subsequent edition is published.

ST. J. D. BUXTON.

### A MAJOR TEXTBOOK ON NUTRITION

*Human Nutrition and Dietetics.* By Sir Stanley Davidson, B.A.Cantab., M.D., F.R.C.P.Ed., F.R.C.P.Lond., M.D. Oslo., A. P. Meiklejohn, M.A., B.Sc., D.M.Oxon., M.R.C.P. Lond., and R. Passmore, M.A., D.M.Oxon. Foreword by Lord Boyd Orr, D.S.O., M.C., LL.D., F.R.S. (Pp. 844+xii; illustrated. 84s.) Edinburgh, London: E. and S. Livingstone, Ltd. 1959.

This is one of the most important books to be reviewed in these columns for some time, and must be regarded as a major addition to textbooks of medical science. It is beautifully written and the text gives no hint of the triple authorship. It is not only a book of great scholarship, but it is also extremely readable and it contains some apt quotations. It was particularly delightful to read Homer's comparison of the impatient Odysseus with a man roasting a sausage in front of a hot fire.

The book is divided into six parts. Part I gives an account of the physiology of nutrition, reminding us, among other things, that the spontaneous regulation of food intake was not designed to cope with the mechanized sedentary conditions of modern life. The second part gives a description of the foods commonly eaten by mankind. Many of us will wish that our mothers could have read the section on sago, tapioca, and arrowroot, and learned that these foods are almost devoid of proteins, minerals, and vitamins. Part III deals with the primary nutritional diseases, and Part IV with the nutritional aspects and dietetic treatment of general diseases. Part V deals with the public-health aspects of nutrition, and contains a series of valuable chapters on subjects such as nutrition surveys, the population problem, famine, and so forth. The final part deals with diet in conditions of physiological stress, such as pregnancy, lactation, and childhood; athletics; and climatic extremes.

The science of nutrition is still full of controversy, but subjects such as the modern loaf, fats, and essential fatty acids in the diet are handled in a balanced way, while the authors are justifiably iconoclastic in dealing with the nutritional neuropathies. The immense difficulties in feeding the inflated world population, in changing food habits, in overcoming custom and religious taboo, and in preventing the continuous degradation of the soil by over-exploitation, wars, and neglect are properly displayed. Handling this large volume of 844 pages, the educationist cannot help wondering where precisely the study of human nutrition and dietetics should come in the curriculum. At present, as the authors say, it is given only a small place, and is uneasily divided between the departments of biochemistry, physiology, clinical medicine, and public health. Most of my generation learnt these subjects after qualification, and I can remember long hours spent poring over Abderhalden and Graham Lusk. For the undergraduate this can only be a reference book, but the candidate for the M.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., D.P.H., or D.T.M. would be better employed in reading it from cover to cover than in chasing the ephemeras of the current literature.

L. J. WITTS.

### SKIN SENSE

*Practical Dermatology.* By George M. Lewis, M.D., F.A.C.P. (Pp. 363+xv; illustrated. 56s.) Philadelphia and London: W. B. Saunders Company. 1959.

Dr. George Lewis is a sound clinician with great experience, and a teacher who is held in high regard. He is also learned in the scientific branches of his