

Reviews

SMALLPOX

Smallpox. By C. W. Dixon, M.D.(Lond.), D.L.O.(Eng.), D.C.H.(Eng.), D.P.H.(Lond.). Pp. 512 + viii; illustrated. £6 10s.) London: J. and A. Churchill. 1962.

This book is unique. Monographs on any aspect of smallpox are rare, but here, for the first time, the clinical, public health, and historical sides of the disease are presented in great detail in one volume. The need for such an up-to-date work has for long been apparent, and your reviewer knows of no one better equipped to carry out the task than the author of this book. Professor Dixon has shown enthusiastic interest in smallpox, at least since his experiences in Tripolitania in 1946, and he has steeped himself in the subject, in its literature, its history, its personalities past and present, and in first-hand observation during recent outbreaks in England and in the Western Pacific region of the World Health Organization.

Though most of the teaching in this book is refreshingly sound, not all of Dixon's views—especially some of those on epidemiology and control—will meet with universal acceptance. But, as he himself says, his criticisms are not made in the spirit of knowing all the answers, but in the hope that some of his ideas may stimulate others to think, to investigate, to confirm, or refute.

The book is necessarily pretty vast, but it is beautifully produced and profusely illustrated. It may be a peculiarity of your reviewer that to him the coloured clinical photographs appear the least satisfactory. He is sorry to have to say this, because he suspects that it is just these of which the author may be most proud.

Dixon is generous in acknowledging his sources of information. The list of references and the separate "name and place" and "subject" indexes are excellent. This book does not displace earlier monographs on specific aspects—particularly the clinical aspects—of the disease, but without a shadow of doubt it now becomes, and surely will for many years remain, the universal standard reference book on smallpox.

J. PICKFORD MARSDEN.

BEING IN HOSPITAL

People in Hospital. By Elizabeth Barnes. (Pp. 155 + xxiii; illustrated. 12s. 6d.) London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd. 1961.

This book is the result of discussions on human problems in hospitals undertaken over a period of three years by study groups in Canada, the U.S.A., and eighteen European countries, and sponsored by three national mental health, nursing, and hospital associations. The group findings were later discussed with an International Expert Group whose comments are included. From all this material and her own observations at the sessions Miss Elizabeth Barnes, a nurse-journalist, has produced this attractive book. It is not a research report but a co-ordinated account of views expressed about people in hospital.

All kinds of hospitals were considered. Most of the discussion groups consisted of nurses and psychiatrists and only one had patients in it. It is interesting that few had surgeon members. Most of the current hospital problems are mentioned, such as patient-centred versus task-centred nursing care, noise, privacy, visiting,

administration ("when it is good no one knows it is there"), and bringing the relatives into the therapeutic team. There is an excellent chapter on the problems of old people. Chronologically organized case notes are recommended as an aid to efficiency.

It appears that the patient's main problems arise from lack of information about the non-medical aspects of hospital life. The ordeal of being in hospital is lessened if someone explains what is going on, but too often the patient has to ask the questions, and the greatest single cause of disturbances to his peace of mind seems to be failure of communication at all levels.

The hospital world is moving from its present largely physical approach to disease towards a deeper concern for human problems. Miss Barnes has done a great service in presenting these in a form which will appeal to most readers. It is a very good book which should be read by all those who work in hospitals, as well as by patients and members of hospital management committees.

C. ALLAN BIRCH.

FREEZING LIVING TISSUES

Biological Effects of Freezing and Supercooling. By Audrey U. Smith, D.Sc., M.B., B.S. (Pp. 462 + xi; illustrated. 55s.) London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd. 1961.

The Physiological Society has once again acquired merit by publishing a monograph on a subject which has stimulated wide interest but as yet has to be read up in journals of different disciplines not equally accessible to most readers.

The problem of freezing and storing living tissues and of their recovery afterwards is of great practical interest in medicine but its study has also contributed to our fundamental knowledge of the phenomenon of life. Dr. Audrey Smith was joint discoverer of the protection afforded by glycerol to cells at low temperatures and responsible for applying this observation to the preservation of bull spermatozoa. This work has already had a profound effect on the breeding of cattle. The preservation of red cells treated with glycerol over weeks, months, and even years has found wide application in medicine.

The monograph deals with the viability of frozen spermatozoa, and the preservation of red cells and of micro-organisms at low temperatures as well as of ova, ovarian tissue, embryos, and tissue cultures. There are chapters on the theoretical background of these observations and on their extension to whole organs, and on the effect of sub-zero temperatures on poikilothermic and warm-blooded animals. It is now possible to supercool whole hamsters and to resuscitate them. Supercooling seems in fact to be the method by which Nature enables fish to survive in Arctic waters.

The book is well illustrated, gives numerous references, and has a generous index. Many readers may be surprised at the rate of development of this new discipline of cryobiology and at its ramifications. They will find this book a welcome survey.

H. LEHMANN.

PARATHYROID RESEARCH

The Parathyroids. Proceedings of a Symposium on Advances in Parathyroid Research held at the Rice Institute, now Rice University, Houston, Texas. Edited by Roy O. Greep, Ph.D. (Pp. 473 + xvii; illustrated. 98s.) Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1961.

This well-edited and finely illustrated edition reports a major symposium on advances in parathyroid research