

## Liver Insufficiency

**Hepatic Failure.** Henry Brown, A.B., M.D. (Pp. 137; \$10.50.) Charles C. Thomas. 1970.

Unlike the cardiac and respiratory varieties, hepatic failure is extremely difficult to define—and for that matter almost impossible to treat effectively. The mechanism underlying acute hepatic failure, for example, seems to be different from that of chronic portal systemic encephalopathy, and after many years of intense effort the role of ammonia intoxication is still poorly understood.

Dr. Brown, a Harvard surgeon well known for his investigations into the metabolic relationships between glycolysis and the urea cycle in cirrhosis and after portacaval shunts, is well qualified to write about hepatic failure. But his book is disappointing because too much of it consists of detailed descriptions of experimental methods and case histories more appropriate to original papers or a thesis than to a monograph such as this. Chapter V, for instance, entitled "Protein nutrition in liver disease," is taken up almost entirely with methodology in the experimental synthesis of pep-

tides which has little relevance to the matter in hand. Perhaps the most interesting parts are those concerned with the enzymatic activities of the liver, for here surely the clue must lie in the failure to provide energy via the Krebs tricarboxylic acid cycle for the synthesis of urea. For the rest there are conventional accounts of the theories of liver failure and of various methods of treatment, but short as the book is its length could have been halved by a more fustidious and critical approach.

A. PATON

## Maintaining the Heart Rate

**The Artificial Cardiac Pacemaker: Its History, Development and Clinical Application.** H. J. Th. Thalen, M.D., *et al.* (Pp. 359; £6.30.) Heinemann. 1970.

This book is an account of the development, design, and operation of cardiac pacemakers and electrodes looked at from the viewpoint of medical physics. It contains a complete description of the authors' extensive research work at Groningen, which is nicely

blended with a full account of the literature on the subject. There are, for example, clear presentations of the principles of "on-demand" pacemakers, the relative merits of monopolar versus bipolar electrodes, the pros and cons of endocardial as compared with epicardial pacing, and stimulation threshold. The technical details of running a pacemaker clinic are also fully described. The authors' technique is subpectoral implantation of the pacemaker, using an intra-

mural loop electrode of their own design. Apart from recording that no wire fractures had occurred to date in 200 patients they give little other information about the clinical course of their patients.

This is a very useful reference book, especially on the experimental and electronic aspects of pacemakers.

A. HOLLMAN

## Rheumatic Diseases

**Modern Trends in Rheumatology—2** Ed. Alan G. S. Hill, M.C., F.R.C.P.(Ed.), (Pp. 376; £6.) Butterworths. 1971.

This is a worthy successor to the first of the series published in 1966 under the same editor, the director of the Oxford Regional Rheumatic Diseases Research Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Aylesbury. Like its predecessor it is a well produced, practical, and useful addition to the existing literature on this rapidly growing subject.

The shift of interest in the last five years is shown by its contents, there being chapters on bioengineering aspects of synovial fluid and cartilage, on the lubrica-

tion and stiffness of joints, on joint prostheses and braces, on immunosuppressive drugs in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, and three chapters on surgery of the hand, hip, and knee respectively. The only chapter dealing with corticosteroids is one on corticosteroid-induced suppression of the cerebro-hypothalamo-pituitary-adrenal axis: this is one of four chapters from the lively Rheumatism Research Centre in Glasgow. For the practical clinician the chapters on the rheumatoid foot (A. St.J. Dixon, Bath) and rheumatoid arthritis of the cervical spine (J. Ball and J. Sharp, Manchester and Buxton) will particularly appeal, and H. L. F. Currie (London Hospital) writes a critical and balanced chapter on immunosuppressive drugs in this disease.

The contributors are almost entirely from the United Kingdom, only Edwin Seegmiller and Sanford Meyerowitz (U.S.A.), W. M. Zinn and R. Lagier (Switzerland), and Jacques Forestier (France) writing from overseas. It is a very great pleasure to see the last named still active in the field to which he has contributed so much over the past 43 years.

In a specialty where so many changes in therapy and ideas regarding aetiology and management have occurred this book is particularly to be recommended because of the sane and balanced views it expresses; a reflection, perhaps, of its editor's own personality and his choice of contributors.

F. DUDLEY HART

## Drug Addiction

**A.B.C. of Drug Addiction.** Collected Articles by various authors. (Pp. 93; 80p.) John Wright & Sons. 1970.

*Community Health* in 1969 devoted two special issues to drug abuse. The list of contributors was distinguished, and their 15 papers are now brought together in one volume. A book which places the spiritual, forensic, and pharmacological aspects of the same question in juxtaposition should hopefully be able to provide a synthetic vision of things which must elude those who see the drug problem only from one limited and personal angle. In the event, and very sadly, the book just fails to come alive.

Why should such a good idea not have been more fruitful? One shortcoming is the imbalance of much opinion and little fact. Opinion is of course in part the very stuff of which papers like these should properly be made, but some of the opinions in circulation have the appearance of very well worn bank notes indeed. Has anyone so much as a tittle of evidence that the upsurge in this country's heroin problem was causally related to anomy or to the disillusionment of the young with modern society?

Turning from opinion to fact, the reader will find that some of the information in this book is rather old. An anonymous magistrate quotes the view that "there are 500,000 new drug addicts in Britain each year and 24,000 deaths resulting from drug addiction." Other contributors deserve mention, however, as

providing particularly useful and succinct essays: Dr. J. H. Willis demolishes at least a few of the myths, Dr. T. H. Bewley and Dr. R. de Alarcon provide accurate documentation, and Dr. M. Mitcheson gives a coherent analysis of the problems set by poly-drug abuse.

If this book were a public meeting one might be disappointed by its disorder and disarray, be tempted to interject objections, even at times to overcome with ennui. But one would in the end have to admit that the very confusion of the meeting was itself an astonishingly accurate reflection of society's present position. Seen in that light the book has value, but as a lexicon its deficiencies are too many.

GRIFFITH EDWARDS