BOOK REVIEWS

Synovial Joints: Their Structure and Mechanics. By C. H. Barnett, D. V. Davies, and M. A. MacConaill. 1961. Pp. 304, 60 figs. Longmans Green, London. (50s.)

The authors set out to give a concise survey of modern views on articular function. At the outset let it be said that each of them has, in his own particular field, made a number of original contributions in one or more aspects of the structure or function of synovial joints.

The contents of the book are divided into the following sections: Section I deals with "The Components of Joints"; Section II deals with "The Biology of Joints"; Section III with "The Mechanics of Joints"; and Section IV with "The Functions of Joints".

An attempt has been made to answer a number of questions which, from time to time, have been raised on different aspects of joints. In answering some of these questions, the authors rightly point out that "Question leads to question, and the portal of knowledge is questioning". Nevertheless, a number of problems have been successfully answered by them. More problems are still unsolved, and the authors give an unbiased survey of the facts that are already known.

The book covers a wide scope and should be of value not only to the anatomist but also to the orthopaedic surgeon, the rheumatologist and the physiotherapist.

There is an extensive bibliography which gives a valuable guide to the more significant contributions, and should be of value to the intending research worker in this field.

The book can be recommended without reservation.
W. J. HAMILTON.

Le coude en pratique rhumatologique (The Elbow in Rheumatological Practice). By S. de Sèze and M. Maître. 1960. Pp. 148, 105 figs. Masson, Paris. (34 NF.)

The presentation of this book is identical with that of "The Shoulder in Rheumatological Practice", also from the Viggo-Peterson Rheumatism Centre in Paris. Seemingly the authors have set themselves the task of covering the articular system with a series of monographs on individual joints. As before, the emphasis is on the illustrations which are excellently reproduced. All the main articular diseases which may affect the elbow, as well as a number of rarer bone diseases, are represented. This is, in fact, mainly a book of x-ray diagnosis of the elbow. If the series is to be completed it will form a useful documentation of joint lesions and could be helpful in teaching those unfamiliar with rheumatology. One cannot help wondering, however, if it will have that practical value in a rheumatological clinic, which is suggested by the title. It is mostly the severe examples of articular disease that are illustrated, and the illustrations are taken from patients in whom the diagnosis would be quite obvious from the clinical appearances elsewhere. On the other hand, careful clinical examination of the elbow may be very informative in early cases, particularly in elucidating problems of

differential diagnosis, and it is just here that this book would be of little use. The tiny nodules of rheumatic fever, better seen than felt; the so-called "pre-nodular" thickening of elbow subcutaneous tissue; the rarer causes of lumps near the elbow, such as xanthomatosis and calcinosis; the skin lesions of psoriasis and disseminated lupus; the slight loss of full extension that may be the only sign of previous healed joint disease; the impacted fracture of the neck of the radius masquerading as arthritis; these are all examples of practical rheumatology which are not dealt with in this book. Nor do the authors give us much guidance on the practical problems of surgery and splinting of the elbow. No mention is made of the main neurological lesions resulting from damage to the soft tissue around the elbow joint, although ulnar paralysis due to bony enlargement is considered. This attractive book is not likely to be as useful as the title would suggest. ALLAN ST. J. DIXON.

The Biochemistry of Mucopolysaccharides of Connective Tissues, Biochemical Society Symposium, No. 20. 1961. Pp. 125. University Press, Cambridge. (15s.)

The symposia held from time to time by the Biochemical Society almost invariably prove of wide interest. That held in February, 1960, on the biochemistry of mucopolysaccharides of connective tissue must have been even more successful than usual as judged by this recently published report.

The structure and metabolism of the sulphated polysaccharides were clearly described by Helen Muir. Her contribution included an excellent account of the work on the chondroitin sulphate protein complexes and a useful summary of some relative variations with age and disease. The methods available for the histological demonstration of mucopolysaccharides in connective tissue were critically reviewed by R. C. Curran, and a brief communication by Sven Gardell of Stockholm described some of the recent technical advances for their isolation and identification. The structure and function of hyaluronate was then discussed by H. J. Rogers in an article that is a model of clarity and simplicity. Equally clear and valuable was Storey's brief description of the recently discovered role of the sugar nucleotides in the interconversion of sugars and in the synthesis of glucosides.

Kent's contribution on "some biochemical aspects of sulphated mucopolysaccharides" included much of the recent work on the mechanisms of sulphation as well as some useful references to other sulphated compounds of biochemical significance. The final paper by A. G. Walker on "the enzymic degradation of mucopolysaccharides" may well have proved somewhat indigestible at the end of such an intellectual feast and many will therefore welcome its publication so as to be able to digest it at leisure.

This small volume is a valuable contribution to the literature of its subject: it is accurate, up to date, and remarkably comprehensive. It can be recommended without reservation. L. E. GLYNN.