BOOK REVIEWS

Bréviaire de Rhumatologie à l'Usage du Praticien. By the Medical Staff of the Service de Rhumatologie de l'Hôpital Lariboisière (Centre Viggo-Petersen) and S. de Sèze. 2nd ed., 1961. Pp. 370, 178 figs. Expansion Scientifique, Paris. (46 NF.)

The second edition of this practical volume, which is intended primarily for the general practitioner, nevertheless holds much of interest for the specialist. The first edition was published in 1958 and the second (1961) is virtually unchanged. There are chapters dealing with specific diseases (*e.g.* gout, rheumatic fever), others cover regional diagnosis (*e.g.* the painful foot, the elbow in rheumatological practice), and some are concerned with systemic effects (*e.g.* generalized bone decalcification). The approach is strictly practical and yet manages to avoid monotony by imparting interesting pieces of information *en passant*. Thus we are warned that rheumatic fever can occur at any age, without preceding tonsillitis, that it develops slowly, and that more than five joints, usually large ones, are involved; that shoulders are involved in 49% of male and 57% of female cases of rheumatoid arthritis, while hips, on the contrary, are attacked in only one male in seven and one female in four. The reader is taught how to interrogate and examine the patient and is shown how to differentiate between a number of conditions having some common feature (*e.g.* osteoporosis, osteomalacia, and hyperparathyroidism). Above all, there is no lack of sound advice of which one example will suffice. When an elderly patient with an osteo-arthritic neck, the penalty of old age, complains of vertigo, headache, tinnitus, and other imperfectly understood conditions, it is tempting to find a ready explanation in the characteristic x-ray appearances. Such an attitude draws the following comment from the authors, best rendered in the original:

"Il ne serait pas conforme aux règles du bon sens ni de la saine clinique, de remplacer ainsi une position dubitative, fondée sur la claire conscience de notre ignorance, par une attitude affirmative appuyée sur des arguments douteux."

As seems inevitable when a number of authors combine to produce one book, an odd chapter here and there will show signs of old age. Thus the admirable chapter on gout mentions colchicine and probenecid as uricosuric agents and adds that certain derivatives of phenylbutazone, which are being studied, have been found to have powerful uricosuric properties but have not yet found practical application. The same words were used in the first edition. In the chapter on rheumatoid arthritis there is a short description of a condition called "pseudo-polyarthrite rhizomélique" in old people. The salient features are that it usually affects the shoulder-girdle, that there is no spread to other joints, and that

it runs a benign course with recovery in 1 or 2 years. Could this not be our old friend "polymyalgia rheumatica", that Don Juan of Rheumatology who is accused by some of a liaison with rheumatoid arthritis and suspected by others of an intimate relationship with giant-celled arteritis? Such minor criticisms do not detract from the value of the work and it may be argued, with some justification, that no textbook can be up to date.

Although a table of contents is provided, there is no index and no list of references. The "commercials", in the shape of drug manufacturers and purveyors of surgical appliances, have been relegated to the back of the book where they occupy a section of their own on yellowish paper, like French headlights, in subdued contrast with the white and glossy text.

DAVID PREISKEL.

British Medical Bulletin—Special Number on the Adrenal Cortex. Vol. XVIII, No. 2, May, 1962. (Medical Department, The British Council, London.) (20s.)

This elegant collection of signed review articles covers every aspect and summarizes the present state of knowledge related to the adrenal cortex, both in man and in other vertebrate species. It is issued under the scientific editorship of Professor F. T. G. Prunty, with the collaboration of Drs. Folley, Nabarro, and R. D. Short.

In spite of the recent spate of publications covering this field of knowledge, Professor Prunty considers, rightly, that no apology need be offered for the appearance of this comprehensive symposium in view of the rate at which facts are accumulating in this sphere; and the consequent necessity for these to be adequately correlated and digested periodically so that suitable hypotheses may be propounded, on which further work can be based.

That this branch of knowledge should have developed so late is strange, in view of its importance. It has been known that the adrenal glands are essential for life since the time of Addison and Brown-Séquard, but even now there is considerable lack of knowledge regarding their mode of action under physiological conditions. During the last 30 years, however, knowledge has accumulated at an increasing rate regarding the chemistry and pharmacology of the adrenal steroid hormones, and synthesis has been achieved. A vast array of analogues of cortisol are now available, ranging in action from that of the parent substance to that of aldosterone. It is also certain that it is the combination of cortisol and aldosterone which is essential to life, the role of the androgenic hormones being less certainly known.

Unlike many projects which are financed from the public purse, the special numbers of the *British Medical*