BOOK REVIEWS

Further Rare Diseases and Debatable Subjects. By F. Parkes Weber. 1949. London: Staples Press. Pp. 236. 25s.

The value of the detailed study and publication of single rare and atypical cases is frequently under debate. There is no doubt of their great interest and that sometimes "the exception may prove the rule", but publication of such cases in specialist journals has to be strictly limited. Dr. Parkes Weber has "from time immemorial" been widely regarded as the Specialist in Rare Diseases and in his new book he goes so far as to advocate the need for such a speciality. In 1946 he produced his first book of 165 pages on rare diseases in which he discussed cases of scleroderma and dermatomyositis, cholesterol degeneration in rheumatoid nodules, calcinosis, and acroparaesthesia with Heberden's node formation, subjects of particular value to those interested in rheumatism. He has now written a further volume on the same lines, describing more cases and in some chapters a follow-up of cases described in the first book. In his chapter on "Zest in Old Age" he gives his own reaction to recreation, as diagnosed by Sir James Paget, that to some "change of work is better than rest or amusing games".

Of particular interest to Rheumatologists in this volume are the following chapters. "Necrobiotic Nodules in Rheumatoid Arthritis", previously published in this Journal (1948, 1, 63), describes the widespread nature of such nodules in the pleura, pericardium and myocardium and also cholesterol degeneration in certain cases, work substantiated by the post mortem findings on Case 12 and in Case 13 of an article also published in this Journal (Kersley and others (1946), 5, 141). His case of calcinosis is of special interest in view of its debatable relationship to the collagen diseases. In this connection an interesting paper was read by Lansbury in Philadelphia, during the 1949 post-convention tour, suggesting a link between this disease and the calcinosis produced in guinea pigs as the result of deficiency of green vegetables. A crude cortical extract appeared to be of some value in treatment.

A useful review on panniculitis by Dr. Alice Carleton is included under the heading of Weber-Christian disease or relapsing febrile nodular non-suppurative panniculitis.

There is also an intriguing description of a case of idiopathic osteoporosis at the early age of 44, which is compared with Burrows and Graham's case, published in this Journal (1947, 3, 129).

This book, though a rather unco-ordinated collection of papers on rare syndromes, only too often named after some author of lesser or greater distinction, who first described them, makes interesting reading. Unfortunately, there is often no suggestion why such a syndrome occurs or how it should be treated. There

are few readers who will fail to find in this book some case report which bears on their own particular interests in medicine, and all will pay a tribute of admiration to the wide knowledge and clinical acumen of the author. G. D. KERSLEY.

Rheumatism. By H. Warren Crowe, D.M.(Oxon), B.Ch., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. 1949. London: Staples Press Ltd. Second edition. Pp. 270. 17s. 6d.

The name of H. Warren Crowe has been associated with "Rheumatism" for many years, and despite the changing fashions of therapy, he has remained constant to the vaccine treatment of the rheumatic diseases.

In the preface to this second edition of his book the author states that great advances have been made in the treatment of the rheumatic diseases since the publication of the first edition and goes on to say " . . . It is significant that no change has been found necessary in the technique of vaccine therapy". The confidence inherent in this statement manifests itself through the whole book and constitutes both its strength and its weakness.

Its forcefulness and wide appeal lie in the exact detail of its instructions regarding the handling of the different types of rheumatic disability. So long as the aetiology of this disability group remains obscure and its response to treatment unpredictable, so long will the problem remain a worry to the general practitioner dealing with individual treatment. This book contains much useful general information and practical advice apart from the detail regarding vaccine therapy, and its appeal is evidenced by the appearance of this second edition.

The author himself admits that some of the views expressed are individual and not acceptable to many of the recognized authorities in this field. Though modern thought has tended to swing away from the idea of infection as the primary factor in arthritis, the author claims that infection is the most important factor in all rheumatic conditions whether articular or non-articular. In his opinion osteo-arthritis is infective in origin and "the presence of a microbe is essential to the disease". He also states that acute infective arthritis is distinct from rheumatoid arthritis from which it can be distinguished clinically and radiologically, saying that "in its later stages it becomes osteo-arthritis and is quite indistinguishable from it".

His technique of vaccine therapy aims not at desensitization but, by small doses, at tissue sensitization or immunization, and at periodic stimulation. His technique of gold therapy is also by small doses (varying from 4 to 0.04 mg.) and he favours the colloidal preparations of the metal. He considers gold therapy to be akin to vaccine therapy in so far as its action is not chemotherapeutic but immunizing. Small dosage is also claimed to give the best results in local analgesic injection of tender spots. He advises that no more than 0.2 cc. be used of an 0.5 per cent. procaine solution.

Admirable and praiseworthy though such independence of thought and action may be, modern medicine demands that certain basic standards of assessment of improvement and measures of disability shall be satisfied and followed up over long periods before therapeutic claims can be justified. Clinical impressions and