BOOK REVIEWS

The Scourge of Rheumatism. Wm. Heinemann, Medical Books Ltd., London. Pp. 85. 5s.

This report of the proceedings at a conference held by the British Rheumatism Association opens with addresses by well known authorities on the treatment and general management of rheumatoid arthritis, which may be read with profit by the laity, since they bring the newest remedies into due perspective and correct erroneous ideas. The problem of the rural patient living often at a distance from any centre for treatment was thoroughly discussed and the need for physiotherapists in the smaller towns and villages emphasized. This is a matter which might well receive consideration as a part of the National Health Service, the available directories of physiotherapists seem to suggest that in many large towns there are far more than can make a living while in the smaller centres there are none. This is probably because the amount of work would be insufficient to provide a reasonable income, and a car might be a necessity and some form of subsidy or salary would be required, some arrangement of the kind would certainly relieve the strain on the ambulance service in many districts and thus effect an economy. The patient who is housebound, either from the degree of crippling or the burden of domestic duties, might find a visiting physiotherapist a great boon.

Rehabilitation, the provision for employment of those who are crippled, and the work of existing voluntary organizations furnish the material for other addresses and discussions, and indicate how wide is the field for the further work which the British Rheumatic Association is seeking to do. This little book deserves to be widely read.

C. W. BUCKLEY.

The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy (1950), 8th ed. Merck and Co. Inc., New Jersey, U.S.A. Pp. 1592. Thumb-index. \$5.00.

The sub-title of this book, "A Source of Ready Reference for the Physician", indicates its object and scope. It is fifty years since the first edition was published and its growth in popularity is demonstrated by the fact that the first printing of 75,000 copies of the eighth edition was exhausted by the date of publication. The manual is edited by a staff of twelve physicians with the assistance as advisers and consultants of a hundred clinicians throughout the United States, and has now been brought right up to date, reflecting the phenomenal advances in medical science in the last decade. It deals for the most part with diagnosis and treatment, but other important aspects of medicine have not been neglected. Every known disease, including many that are extremely rare, appears to be described, and there are valuable chapters on routine immunization procedures, laboratory tests within the scope of the general practitioner, the general management of the patient before and after operation, and much practical advice on clinical and bedside procedures, nursing, diets, etc.

The remedies advised in treatment are an important feature, full prescriptions being given at the end of each section. Surgical operations are indicated where needed but are not described. Homely remedies rarely referred to in the student's training are also included. If any criticism is called for, it might be that the use of physiotherapeutic measures does not receive the attention which might be expected. The chapter on antibiotic therapy deals with the newest discoveries in this field, and the table of chemotherapy suitable for the more common infections is likely to prove very useful.

The essential clinical features of each disease are described fully though briefly. The latest available information on cortisone and ACTH is given, including clinical results