The Spa in Medical Practice. Report of a Committee of the British Medical Association. 1951. B.M.A., London. 3s. 6d.

This little booklet embodies the work of a committee of the British Medical Association under the chairmanship of Lord Horder, which being composed of Consultants, Spa practitioners, General practitioners, and observers from the Ministry of Health, was well equipped to investigate the subject impartially and to furnish a report which should prove useful to practitioners, free from advertisement while giving all necessary information.

In an introductory chapter the distinctive features of spa treatment are fully discussed and stress is laid on the part it can play in convalescence and rehabilitation as well as in the management of those diseases such as gout and rheumatism for which its value is established. The reputation of the British spas dates from the mid-16th century and has steadily increased until the present day, but the reputation of spa therapy in general may reasonably be dated back to Hippocratic times when the importance of rest, fresh air in favourable climatic surroundings, and recreation for body and mind combined with physiotherapy was already recognized. The primitive methods of drinking the mineral waters and bathing therein undoubtedly established the repute of the spas which has been maintained and increased. The 18th century was marked by a remarkable output of literature on the subject, and by the establishment of the great spa hospitals which have done much to advance the treatment of chronic rheumatic diseases and later, by establishing research laboratories, to increase our knowledge of their pathology. A further stimulus was given by the work of Priessnitz in the 19th century. Though only a peasant, he gained a great reputation for his "Hydrotherapy", which was established upon more scientific principles by Winternitz and Baruch, and, in Great Britain, by Fortescue Fox. The value of his methods was soon recognized in the spas; new techniques were introduced and with the dawn of the 20th century physiotherapy was added in many other forms, notably electrical treatment and remedial gymnastics.

The establishment of the National Health Service has brought spa treatment into a still wider field of usefulness. The social aspect of the annual spa cure has to a great extent given place to the hospital organization associated with attractive surroundings and amenities which promote rehabilitation in traumatic conditions and convalescence after illnesses other than those diseases for which the spas have been conspicuously noted in the past. All these features are described in the opening chapters which are full of interest. The second half of the book is devoted to descriptions of the principal spas. This supplies useful information, which might perhaps be more scientific in character, though that aspect may be considered as adequately treated in the earlier chapters on the indications for choice of spa and the various techniques employed. What is most needed now is the provision of better facilities for training doctors in the special methods of spa therapy.

C. W. BUCKLEY.

The Pituitary-Adrenocortical Function. Compiled by Karl A. Baer and Marjory Spencer, with the assistance of Paulyne Tureman and Stanley Jablonski. (1950.) Army Medical Library, Washington, D.C.

This bibliography, which reports 3,447 papers on ACTH, Cortisone, and Related Compounds, with brief abstracts from the more important articles and an index of authors, is likely to be very useful to workers in this field and to rheumatologists in particular. The action of the United States Army Medical Library in publishing this exhaustive work will be greatly appreciated.

C. W. BUCKLEY.

The Cortisone Investigator. Merck and Co. Inc., Rahway, N.J., U.S.A.

This semi-monthly publication, the first number of which appeared in June, 1950, comprises abstracts from the medical literature on cortisone and related substances. The abstracts are fairly full and informative, and the publication furnishes a very useful up-to-date guide to the literature of the subject.

C. W. BUCKLEY.