BOOK REVIEWS

Der Rheumatismus. Edited by R. Hopmann. 1956. Pp. 99, 29 figs. Georg Thieme Verlag, Stuttgart. (D.M. 16.50; 28s.)

With the help of his colleagues at the University of Cologne, Professor Hopmann has produced a volume of about 100 pages into which he has compressed the views of a pathologist, bacteriologist, paediatrician, orthopaedic surgeon, etc. This has widened the horizon but has also given scope for a number of points of view which are sometimes difficult to reconcile. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the adherents of the theory of focal sepsis have received little, if any, opposition. It is pleasant to record that the names of British workers figure in the text and that in describing pain-distribution pride of place has been given to diagrams by Lewis and Kellgren, and by Copeman. The reader is introduced to the mysteries of C-reactive protein and the more recent work in the field of rheumatology, and for the middle-aged rheumatologist, who believes in the Byronic dictum that "the days of our youth are the days of our glory", the Editor, perhaps without realizing it, has provided a nostalgic classification of the rheumatic diseases in which "Sciatica" comes under the heading of "Neuralgias" and "Muscular Rheumatism" is placed in a category of its own.

Paper, print, x-ray photographs, etc., are all of excellent quality; the references provided at the end of each chapter bear an international character.

DAVID PREISKEL.

Joint Ligament Relaxation treated by Fibro-Osseous Proliferation. By George Stuart Hackett. 1956. Pp. xiv+917, illus. Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford; Thomas, Springfield, Ill. (36s.)

In this book the author describes his approach to the problem of chronic low backache and gives details of his method of treatment. Dr. Hackett believes that most cases of low backache, and of pain referred into the legs from the back, are due to "relaxation" of specific liga-

ments such as the ilio-lumbar and sacro-iliac: relaxation, following defective repair at the fibro-osseous junction after injury, allows abnormal lengthening of the ligament under tension, producing pain from stimulation of nerve fibres within the ligament. A similar process is held to account for chronic pain affecting other joints such as the wrist and ankle. Methods for localizing the origin of the pain are described, together with the technique of treatment by injection of a sclerosing or "proliferating" solution.

Low backache is certainly common, and often enough it is difficult to make a precise diagnosis, while treatment may be prolonged and disappointing. Protruded intervertebral disk and spondylosis have replaced fibrositis as the most frequently named cause, but there has been no remarkable advance in treatment. But, while Dr. Hackett may justifiably condemn the ill-considered laminectomy or spinal fusion, one feels that in his enthusiasm for his own methods, his attitude to other ideas has become, perhaps, less than objective; not everyone would agree that disk lesions should only be diagnosed if there are neurological signs of root compression, while hyperextension in such cases ought, by reducing tension on the posterior spinal ligaments, to relieve pain if the author's views are accepted, whereas in fact it usually accentuates it. It is not easy to understand why injection of a "proliferating solution" should cure tennis-elbow, when hydrocortisone, which presumably acts in quite the opposite way, will also do so.

Nevertheless, it is recognized that pain can arise from ligaments and may be referred to distant areas, and such a mechanism as Dr. Hackett describes may well account for the pain of chronic "sprains" and of a number of cases of backache: if his method works it will surely be welcomed by those patients who are too often forced to resort to those practitioners whom Dr. Hackett succinctly describes as "disk jockeys and bone masons".

A. J. POPERT.

OBITUARY

MATHIEU-PIERRE WEIL

Dr. Mathieu-Pierre Weil, who died in Paris in March, 1956, stood at the cradle of the "Ligue Internationale contre le Rhumatisme" with Dr. Fortescue Fox, Dr. Pemberton, Dr. van Breemen, and Dr. Ginsburg. He had been Vice-President of the French National League and after the second world war was chosen as the first President of the

newly-founded Ligue Européenne.

Of his scientific achievements we call attention especially to his work on gout and on sacro-ileitis in ankylosing spondylitis.

We honour and remember him as one of the pioneers in modern rheumatology.

J. GOSLINGS.