BOOK REVIEWS

Rheumatic Fever. Epidemiology and Prevention. Edited by R. Cruickshank and A. A. Glynn. 1959. Pp. 193. Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford. (25s.)

This book consists of the papers given at a Symposium on the Epidemiology and Prevention of Rheumatic Fever, held at the International Children's Centre in Paris in 1956.

Shortly after the French report had gone to press, the editor, Dr. R. Gautier, died suddenly, so that the editing of the English edition was undertaken by Prof. Cruickshank and Dr. Glynn. This is divided into four main sections: the biology of group A haemolytic streptococci, the epidemiology of infection with group A haemolytic streptococci, the epidemiology of rheumatic fever, and the prevention of rheumatic fever. Each section contains contributions by workers in that field, together with discussions. As must be expected in a Symposium of this nature, the length and quality of the papers varies, but the general standard is high.

In the first part of the biology of group A haemolytic infection, as well as a general review of the subject, there is useful information on methods. The epidemiology of streptococcal infection in various countries is well documented. In the section on epidemiology of rheumatic fever there is a comprehensive review of the evidence for the relationship of group A streptococci infection to this disease by Dr. M. McCarty of New York, and other factors, such as host immunological reactivity, environment, heredity, etc., are well discussed. In the section on prevention of rheumatic fever, Dr. M. Finland of Boston gives a valuable review of the problems raised by chemotherapy. He stresses that there has been no significant increase in the degree of resistance in any of the beta haemolytic or viridans streptococci, and that penicillin and sulphonamides would appear to be the most suitable antibiotics for therapy, and although, as yet, the role of the long-acting sulphonamides has not been worked out, these may be very useful. This paper is followed by authoritative reports and discussion on prophylaxis. The problem of the first attack and its prevention is also considered and while the value of treating overt streptococci infection is well recognized, more research is required in this field.

As the reports in this book on the various aspects of rheumatic fever come from most European countries and the United States of America, it gives a good review of the present knowledge of the haemolytic streptococci

and its relationship to rheumatic fever, as well as indicating methods of prevention. B. M. ANSELL.

Lehrbuch der Rheumatologie. By H. Tichy, K. Seidel, and G. Heidelmann. 1959. Pp. 447, 136 figs. V. E. B. Verlag, Berlin. (D.M. 32.70.)

This textbook comes from the Eastern zone of divided Germany (Dresden, Leipzig, and Meiningen). Its comprehensive nature may be gauged from the inclusion of separate chapters on physiotherapy, rehabilitation, statistics, surgery, etc. The authors have avoided grinding any particular medical axe of their own, have set out all points of view fairly, and have given the reader ample information to make up his own mind. As is inevitable in such a procedure, the close text and wealth of detail tend to make the reader's attention wander. A little judicious pruning and re-arrangement of text would soon remedy matters; for example, several pages of prescriptions in common use could safely be left out; while references at the end of each chapter may have some advantage they cause reduplication and lead to inevitable increase in bulk.

Although there are more references to Soviet literature than is customary in Western textbooks, it is only fair to add that the bibliography is truly international and more than adequate. But can one write behind the "iron curtain" without a small political shadow darkening the pages? A valiant attempt in this direction has undoubtedly been made here, but was it not Lloyd George who once said of a political opponent—"he has sat on the fence for so long that the iron has entered his soul"? In this case it is probably not bitterness but some other motive which has led to the omission of every watering place in France, Britain, and Italy from the list of the "most important spas". Such an oversight would be strange in this book with its wealth of detail, but has been counterbalanced by leaving out the Russian spas, about which so little is known (assuming that they exist).

A good deal of attention is devoted to indexing, with separate acknowledgment to authors of monographs and textbooks, and to journals specializing in the rheumatic diseases; there is an index of authors and subject matter. In spite of minor lacunae the volume is a tribute to the industry and scholarship of its authors and to the indisputable fact that medicine knows no frontiers.

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