BOOK REVIEW

Chemistry and Therapy of Collagen Diseases. By DAVID H. NEUSTADT, M.D., with contributions by Jerome Rotstein, M.D. 1963. Pp. 161, 16 figs, index, bibl. Thomas, Springfield, Ill. (\$7.50.)

This little book (161 pages) is one of a series which, to quote the preface by the series editor, Dr. I. Newton Kugelmass, is "charged with the *nisus élan* of chemical wisdom, supreme in choice of international authors, optimal in standards of chemical scholarship, provocative in imagination for experimental research, comprehensive in discussion of scientific medicine, and authoritative in chemical perspective of human disorders".

Of course, nobody expects a preface to be taken seriously, but any reader who is obsessive enough to look at this preface and who might get the idea that he is about to be sold the elixir of life, can be reassured that the book is no more than (and no less than) a sequence of brief, useful, and well-balanced reviews, along orthodox lines, under the chapter headings Biochemistry of Connective Tissue, Biochemistry of Rheumatoid Arthritis, Systemic Lupus, Periarthritis Nodosa, Dermatomyositis, and Diffuse Scleroderma. Students and others seeking up-to-date introduction to these subjects will find these chapters helpful, although less comprehensive than accounts of similar topics in standard texts. The last chapter, a review of "Connective Tissue Diseases with

Agammaglobulinaemia" deserves special mention since it summarizes the present knowledge on an association so puzzling and awkward for the protagonists of the auto-immunity as the cause of "connective tissue" diseases. Up to one-third of the patients with congenital or acquired hypogammaglobulinaemia in the series cited in this chapter are reported to have shown manifestations of these diseases, usually resembling rheumatoid arthritis, and this fact alone deserves the widest possible consideration.

What, one asks, is the point of this juxtaposition of connective tissue biochemistry and the treatment of, say, rheumatoid arthritis? It has been a fashion in medical thought (now somewhat *démodé*) to link them, but like all fashions, sooner or later it has begun to date. Knowledge of the shrinkage temperature of collagen may tell the clinician not to dry his gloves on the stove, but will not influence his decision to treat disseminated lupus. The reader may admire the skill with which these two subjects have been bedded together under the common adjectival cloak of collagen, but will wonder if the union will prove to be fertile. No doubt, it would be technically possible to write a parallel book on "the chemistry of the blood and the treatment of blood diseases", but what purpose would it serve? Which brings us back to that preface.

A. ST. J. DIXON.

HEBERDEN SOCIETY

JOINT MEETING WITH THE NEDERLANDS VERENIGING VAN RHEUMATOLOGEN

Groningen, May 17, 1963

Address of Welcome by the Rector Magnificus of the University, Professor van Os

Compared with this old university, which will celebrate its 350th anniversary in 1964, your associations of rheumatologists which have developed so auspiciously in so short a time are still quite young, and we are pleased that you have now come to Groningen after your successful meeting in Leiden some years ago.

I am not a specialist in rheumatology, but as a pharmacologist considering the position of your specialty in the early days of this ancient university, I asked myself what evidence might be found here of the medicines used for rheumatism in times gone

by. I found many recommendations for external remedies, and if you are interested in old Herbals, you can see some in the hall of our university. Fantasy played a large part in these prescriptions, but modern research has revealed that they all had one ingredient in common: an essential oil named cineol which is found for instance in rosemary and camphor. *Bancke's Herbal* says:

"If thy legges be blowen with gowtde, boyle the leaves in water and bind them in a linnen cloath and winde it about thy legges and it shall do thee much good."

Dodonaeus wrote:

"From the buds and flowers of Rosemary is distilled a very fragrant oil, fit to cure paralysis and to strengthen