BOOK REVIEW

The Pathology of Articular and Spinal Diseases. By Douglas Collins, O.B.E., M.D. 1949. Ed. Arnold and Co., London. Pp. 331. Illustrated. 35s.

This excellent book fills a gap on the shelves which has always been vacant, and one, moreover, of which too many pathologists have been unaware. It is to be hoped that this authoritative description of pathological changes in joints will be widely read; its views are as sound as its allocation of space, which is primarily devoted to the common joint diseases. There are 199 illustrations, all of them original (nowadays itself original) and that works out to 0.62 illustrations per page of text. They are excellently photographed, well chosen, and well reproduced, and there is, moreover, as far as your reviewer can judge, none of that dubious modern practice of inserting some of the illustrations twice. Each chapter is followed by a brief and select list of references, chosen for their importance rather than because they are by friends of the author, recent, listed by other writers, written in the author's mother tongue, or furnished free by a drug house card-index service.

The book starts in orthodox fashion with anatomy and physiology, proceeds with a brief (20-page) review of bone diseases, and then passes on to trauma, osteo-arthritis, gout, specific infections, rheumatic fever, rheumatoid arthritis (51 pages), etc., ending with 80 useful pages on the spine.

The changes described in ankylosing spondylitis, based on four autopsies and the literature, are of outstanding interest, since previous descriptions have been very meagre and in some instances based on cases whose nosological status was rather less than doubtful.

To-day, when so much is made of the rare extra-articular manifestations of joint disease, when there is such insistence that rheumatoid arthritis is a generalized disease, it is refreshing to find a book written primarily on the joint changes. Changes in other organs are briefly mentioned but not illustrated (with the exception of a myocardial Aschoff nodule), which is a little surprising, since the book is entitled "Pathology of Articular and Spinal Diseases" rather than "Pathology of the Joints". The essential value of the book is that it covers a terrain neglected by the average pathologist, whose explorations are usually confined to the cavities of the head, chest, and abdomen, leaving 80 per cent. of the body (gravimetrically) untouched. The clinician will benefit very considerably, although he may regret the lack of individual details or case records, inevitable in such a primarily pathological presentation. The radiologist will learn a good deal from the numerous bone sections illustrated.

If any criticism can be made of such an outstanding and indispensable contribution, it is that the reader finds it difficult to ascertain exactly how much is derived from the literature and how much from the author's own experience, since few statistics are cited relating to an original series. We may be certain, however, that the literature has been critically assessed and that the personal observations and conclusions are securely founded. Finally, the style is lucid, easy to read ("most modern studies suggest that the gouty inherit more than their family wine-cellars"), and free from unnecessary jargon.

E. G. L. BYWATERS,