BOOK REVIEWS

The Scourge of Rheumatism. Wm. Heinemann, Medical Books Ltd., London. Pp. 85. 5s.

This report of the proceedings at a conference held by the British Rheumatism Association opens with addresses by well known authorities on the treatment and general management of rheumatoid arthritis, which may be read with profit by the laity, since they bring the newest remedies into due perspective and correct erroneous ideas. The problem of the rural patient living often at a distance from any centre for treatment was thoroughly discussed and the need for physiotherapists in the smaller towns and villages emphasized. This is a matter which might well receive consideration as a part of the National Health Service, the available directories of physiotherapists seem to suggest that in many large towns there are far more than can make a living while in the smaller centres there are none. This is probably because the amount of work would be insufficient to provide a reasonable income, and a car might be a necessity and some form of subsidy or salary would be required, some arrangement of the kind would certainly relieve the strain on the ambulance service in many districts and thus effect an economy. The patient who is housebound, either from the degree of crippling or the burden of domestic duties, might find a visiting physiotherapist a great boon.

Rehabilitation, the provision for employment of those who are crippled, and the work of existing voluntary organizations furnish the material for other addresses and discussions, and indicate how wide is the field for the further work which the British Rheumatic Association is seeking to do. This little book deserves to be widely read.

C. W. BUCKLEY.

The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy (1950), 8th ed. Merck and Co. Inc., New Jersey, U.S.A. Pp. 1592. Thumb-index. \$5.00.

The sub-title of this book, "A Source of Ready Reference for the Physician", indicates its object and scope. It is fifty years since the first edition was published and its growth in popularity is demonstrated by the fact that the first printing of 75,000 copies of the eighth edition was exhausted by the date of publication. The manual is edited by a staff of twelve physicians with the assistance as advisers and consultants of a hundred clinicians throughout the United States, and has now been brought right up to date, reflecting the phenomenal advances in medical science in the last decade. It deals for the most part with diagnosis and treatment, but other important aspects of medicine have not been neglected. Every known disease, including many that are extremely rare, appears to be described, and there are valuable chapters on routine immunization procedures, laboratory tests within the scope of the general practitioner, the general management of the patient before and after operation, and much practical advice on clinical and bedside procedures, nursing, diets, etc.

The remedies advised in treatment are an important feature, full prescriptions being given at the end of each section. Surgical operations are indicated where needed but are not described. Homely remedies rarely referred to in the student's training are also included. If any criticism is called for, it might be that the use of physiotherapeutic measures does not receive the attention which might be expected. The chapter on antibiotic therapy deals with the newest discoveries in this field, and the table of chemotherapy suitable for the more common infections is likely to prove very useful.

The essential clinical features of each disease are described fully though briefly. The latest available information on cortisone and ACTH is given, including clinical results

to date in many diseases, and also metabolic, hormonal, and other physiologic effects. The Manual runs to close on 1,600 pages, but is nevertheless within the limits of size and weight which justify its description as a handbook, owing to the thinness of the paper and the general arrangement. It will be found of the greatest assistance to the busy general practitioner to whom it may be strongly recommended. C. W. BUCKLEY.

HOSPITAL REPORTS

Reports have been received of the work which is being done in some of the hospitals specializing in the treatment of rheumatic diseases, and in research, clinical and laboratory. These furnish most encouraging evidence of the progress which is being made in some centres in the campaign against rheumatism.

West London Hospital: Department of Rheumatic Diseases. Annual Report for 1949.

Great progress is being made at this centre, which possesses a large staff of skilled workers including holders of Research Fellowships and Studentships. A peripheral clinic established in 1946 is doing good work, and co-operation has been established with the British Post-graduate Hospital. Twelve beds are available for in-patients at the West London Hospital and the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, St. John's Wood, and further beds are shortly to be provided at St. Mary Abbots Hospital, Kensington.

A special research department has been established to which the Medical Research Council has made a large grant to aid study of the effects of cortisone in rheumatic disease and generous grants have also been made by the Dan Mason Research Fellowship of the West London Hospital Medical School; in addition Roche Products Limited have, through the Empire Rheumatism Council, presented a Roche Fellowship tenable for two years for a steroid chemist. The Report contains interesting and important papers by members of the staff, notably one by Dr. P. M. F. Bishop on the bio-chemical and endocrine aspects of cortisone, and one by Dr. A. A. Henly on the adrenocorticotrophic hormone. A list of papers from members of the staff, published elsewhere, is also included. A grant from the British Schering Co. Ltd., has rendered possible this very full and well-produced report.

The Royal Free Hospital: Unit of Rheumatology. Report for 1949.

Important work is being done at this centre; statistics are given of the numbers treated and the results, and the figures show very encouraging improvement in the results of treatment of ankylosing spondylitis. It is pointed out that the long waiting list militates against efficient treatment in hospital of rheumatoid arthritis, cases lose ground often to a serious degree while waiting for admission and the shortage of beds for chronic cases is also a serious matter. Valuable work is being done by the Almoners and useful statistics have been compiled showing that only a small proportion of the cases which have been under treatment relapse. Special attention is being given to the treatment of certain deformities and to rehabilitation, and research in various directions is being actively carried out.

Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases, Bath. Vol. 3, 1948-49.

Here the formation of a research unit in connection with the South-Western and Oxford Regional Hospital Boards has been an important development; the unit has fifty beds and its own laboratory, and a further seventy beds are available for teaching and research. The staff of the research unit consists of four Research Fellows, and the junior hospital staff has been expanded to include a Senior Registrar, two Registrars, and three House Physicians. Further developments, especially in the Manor Hospital for orthopaedic work, are likely in the near future. The Report also includes reprints of papers contributed by members of the staff to various journals. C.W.B.