Book Reviews

Advances in Medicine and Surgery from The Graduate School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia–London: Saunders, 1952. 441 pp. Illus. $8.00.

This is a well-bound volume well printed on excellent paper. Illustrations, where utilized, are good. The subject matter consists of 52 separate papers designed to cover 10 general subjects. The authorship is multiple and comprises 55 contributors, most of whom are connected with the University of Pennsylvania; a few are guest lecturers.

The purpose of the compilation is to fulfill one of the objectives of the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Medicine; namely, to publish in book form the symposia given in a postgraduate course for practicing physicians. The subject matter covered is wide and ranges from a consideration of adrenal cortical hormones on through potassium metabolism, thrombo-embolism, cancer, and functional disorders, to mention a few. There is no direct relationship, other than an occasional coincidental one, between the various general subjects.

It goes without saying that no single person is competent to review adequately such a diverse compilation, even if space restrictions did not automatically preclude such an effort. Least of all should a surgeon take on such an assignment if he has any regard for the customary scientific amenities and enough brains to keep out of trouble. Obviously, the reviewer possesses neither.

It is our impression that the editors and authors have done a difficult task well. As is to be expected in any such assembling of material by so many authors, there is considerable variation in the amount of effort expended and in the method and type of subject management. This concerns the length of discussion and clarity of presentation, as well as fidelity, authenticity, and style of narration. Probably the most serious and most inexcusable breach of fidelity was encountered in Henle's article on mumps, wherein he fails completely to mention the obvious pertinence and priority of Goodpasture's outstanding, classical work. This is the bedrock on which Henle's article rests but, oddly, he inferentially (p. 384, line 3) ascribes it to others.

The reviewer has been interested for years in the efforts of some members of the preclinical medical faculties to stray over into the clinical aspects of medicine. By and large, it is our impression that they do it less gracefully, perhaps with less deftness, than the clinicians, who in turn are poaching along the fringes of pure science.

This volume interestingly illustrates the foregoing without detracting from its charm or real intrinsic value. Each general section is well and interestingly done. To do justice to each of the numerous contributors would require individual mention of each. Limitation of space makes this impractical, although the volume warrants such treatment. In our estimation, this compilation may be read with interest and profit by any physician, irrespective of his field of special interest. Therefore, it is sincerely recommended.

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Biochemistry and Human Metabolism. Burnham S. Walker, William C. Boyd, and Isaac Asimov. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1952. 812 pp. Illus. $9.00.

Some of the textbooks in biochemistry published during the past 15 years have, by the introduction of a few clinical applications, emphasized the interests of medical students. Others, written expressly for medical students, have not adequately combined the fundamentals of the subject with the medical viewpoint. As in other sciences, the authors of textbooks in biochemistry are faced with two difficult problems. The first is that of inclusion or exclusion of material. The border lines between biochemistry, physiology, pharmacology, and microbiology have never been very clear and are becoming less so as these fields develop. The second is that of arrangement of the material for maximum teaching effectiveness. Although the answer to this problem may lie in part in pedagogical theory, the solution usually grows out of the personal ideas and experience of the authors.

Biochemistry and Human Metabolism is intended primarily for medical students. The classical order of topics has been altered extensively. Part I, comprising four chapters, is entitled "Structure." "The Chemistry of Proteins" (Chaps. 1 and 2) is taken up first because of the authors' opinion that these substances are of prime importance to medical biochemistry. "The Chemistry of Carbohydrates and Lipids" is presented as an introduction to tissue chemistry (Chap. 3 of Part I). The fourth chapter deals with blood and the anemias. Part II, designated "Control," contains the usual material on enzymes and hormones. In Part III, "Growth," there are chapters on nucleoproteins, cancer, and reproduction and heredity. Part IV, "Metabolism," takes up food and diet, digestion, intermediary metabolism, electrolytes and water, respiration, heat and work, and excretion. "Vitamins and Vitamin Deficiency Diseases," and "Infection" make up Part V, "Pathology." Colloids, isotopes, thermodynamics, and acids and bases are covered in the appendix.

The success of a textbook as a tool in the teaching process is difficult to forecast. It seems evident, however, that a mere reshuffling of topics does not in itself constitute a real improvement. Moreover, it leads to certain teaching difficulties, such as the postponing of basic definitions and concepts until after their application and significance have been discussed. There is