

BOOK REVIEWS

THE STUFF WE'RE MADE OF, by W. O. Kermack and P. Eggleton. (Pp. 356, 8 Plates, 75 Figs. in the Text.) E. Arnold and Co., London, 1948. 10s. 6d.

The second edition of this book is not greatly different from the first, since research during the last eight years has not seriously modified the facts and theories generally accepted before the first edition was published. Additional information has accumulated, but mostly on detail outside the scope of this book. Knowledge of the vitamins has, however, grown so much that the one chapter devoted to them in the first edition has been replaced by two, one being devoted to the B vitamins. The parts played by riboflavine, nicotinic acid, pyridoxine, biotin, etc., in the nutrition of animals have been worked out, and more experiments have been performed on human beings who have volunteered for various dietary treatments. The production of certain factors by the bacteria present in the alimentary tract has been demonstrated and their worth to the animal noted. The destruction or inhibition of these valuable bacteria by drugs given for other purposes has also been shown. The other fresh chapter in this edition deals with the subject of muscle contraction. The action of adenine triphosphate on myosin and *vice versa* forms the basis for a theory of muscle contraction which the writers "make to work" by means of a working model built up of springs and "Lazy-tongs." They end this chapter with the sentence "Nature's engines are indeed miracles of design and construction; their existence would be incredible if they were not so utterly commonplace." The book is full of sound information, reasoned speculation and a way of "looking at the wood and not only at the trees." It is, in fact, so good that the present reviewer's only regret is that in so many places, the writers have tried to make the book "popular" by using frivolous and skittish expressions: e.g., the term "vitamin racket" has been applied to the whole study of vitamins. If it had been applied to the attempt to get anybody and everybody to dose himself liberally with synthetic vitamins, at a high cost in shillings or dollars, no one could have objected to the term. However, the fact that a second edition has been called for is evidence that the style of the writing has been acceptable to the general public for whom it was intended, and who would possibly not have read the book if it had been consistently serious all through.

K. H. COWARD.

THE PRESENTATION OF TECHNICAL INFORMATION, by R. O. Kapp. Pp. 140 and Index, Constable and Co., London, 1948. 6s.

The many problems arising in the writing of good technical English are carefully analysed in this book and much sound advice is offered to writers of papers, reports and reviews. Although the author himself is concerned with the engineering field his remarks apply equally well to other branches of science. The book is based on a series of lectures given at University College, London, a year or so ago. Functional English, which is not to be confused with Basic English, is described and recommended as the language for scientific writings. Its essential purpose is the conveyance of new information, which may be factual, or argumentative, and infer or suggest new lines of thought. The author discusses the

BOOK REVIEWS

problem not only from the writer's viewpoint but also from that of the reader. Thus, in addition to being good English, Functional English must be easily readable. A good introduction with a statement of the terms of reference, a logical arrangement of thought and argument, the selection of material for its relevance to the problem in hand and the presentation of facts at a pace at which they can be understood and remembered are just as important as well-constructed sentences. A well-written report should not only give information, but should also stimulate thought in the reader. There are useful chapters on the avoidance of circumlocutions and the use of generalisations, qualifications and metaphor. In writing this book the author has put his own principles into practice and the result is a well-written, interesting and stimulating publication which should be read by both students and post-graduate workers. The adoption by students of Professor Kapp's suggestions at an early stage would go far towards the production of laboratory notes of the high standard spoken of so frequently by examiners.

BOOKS RECEIVED

THE CHEMICAL FORMULARY by *H. Bennett*, Vol. VIII. Pp. 428 and Index, Chapman and Hall, Ltd., London, 1948, 42s.

PRINCIPLES OF BIOLOGICAL ASSAY by *C. W. Emmens*. Pp. 204, Chapman and Hall, Ltd., London, 1948, 21s.

THE BACKGROUND OF THERAPEUTICS by *J. H. Burn*. Pp. 335 and Index, Oxford Medical Publications, London, 1948, 22s. 6d.

GRUNDLAGEN DER PHARMAKOLOGIE by *K. W. Merz*. Pp. 274 and Index, Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft M.B.H., Stuttgart, 1948, 4th Ed.

PRECIS DE CHIMIE TOXICOLOGIQUE by *F. Schoofs*. Pp. 513 and Index, Les Presses Universitaires de Liège, 1948, 2nd ed.

LA CHIMIE DES VITAMINES ET DES HORMONES by *J. Sivadjin*, Vol. 1. Pp. 479, Gauthier-Villars, Paris, 1948, 3rd ed.

PRACTICAL PHARMACOGNOSY by *B. E. Hébert and K. W. Ellery*. Pp. 365 and Index, Ballière, Tindall and Cox, London, 1948, 21s.

TRACE ELEMENTS IN FOOD by *G. W. Monier Williams*. Pp. 498 and Index, Chapman and Hall, Ltd., London, 1949, 30s.