

BOOK REVIEWS

MATERIA MEDICA. PHARMACY, PHARMACOLOGY AND THERAPEUTICS, by *W. Hale-White*, 28th Edition, revised by *A. H. Douthwaite*. Pp. 507 with Appendix and Index. J. & A. Churchill, Ltd., London, 1949. 16s. 0d.

There are many books which attempt to present the subjects of materia medica, pharmacology and therapeutics in a form acceptable to the student and to the medical practitioner. The most frequent criticism of such publications is that they either provide too much or too little information. Probably the chief fault of a book such as Hale-White's "Materia Medica" is that the concise nature of the text does not afford a fuller presentation of the available evidence on the pharmacological action of drugs. This does not permit discussion of some aspects of the subject where it is perhaps desirable to distinguish between opinions arising from conjecture and statements based on fact. In conformity with the traditional nature of the book there is a comprehensive list of the drugs and preparations described in the British Pharmacopœia. For the student of pharmacy this may be a desirable feature, but it is doubtful whether the medical student can derive much benefit from such an array of names, except as a dictionary of reference. He might well be puzzled regarding the necessity for a strong tincture and a weak tincture of ginger; a strong and a weak solution of ammonium acetate; a liquid extract, two infusions and a tincture of senega, especially when in the latter instance the text indicates that they are only occasionally used as expectorants. A text-book which in the course of over half a century has provided on the average a revised edition every second year, requires no further comment on its popularity. The 28th edition of this book incorporates all the numerous changes in the drugs and preparations resulting from the appearance of the British Pharmacopœia of 1948.

ANDREW WILSON.

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

Professor Merz, who was formerly Director of the Institute of Pharmaceutical Chemistry in the University of Königsberg, has completed the fourth edition of his text-book of Pharmacology. It is primarily intended for pharmacists, chemists and biologists, and if chemical formulæ might be regarded as an inducement to the reader, there is much to attract his attention. The book is divided into 18 chapters which permits a systematic and quite comprehensive treatment of the subject. The first three chapters consist of a general discussion of definitions, types of pharmacological action and the mechanism of drug action. In the remaining sections the action and uses of drugs are discussed in relation to the systems of the body, in much the same fashion as in Clark's "Applied Pharmacology." There is a concise description of the anatomy, and physiology, and where appropriate, of the pathology relevant to each such system. A very useful chapter deals with the toxicology of the common organic solvents and gases. On the whole the account of the pharmacological actions is sound though in some instances the author appears content to concern himself only with what happens in the frog and not in the higher species, particularly in man. It is desirable also to indicate more clearly that the parasympathomimetic drugs do not stimulate nerve endings, though their action resembles this effect. The book is well illustrated with chemical formulæ, line drawings and photographs of original