

PHARMACOPOEIAS AND FORMULARIES

The six years that have elapsed since the original publication of the B. Vet. C. have seen an important and useful rôle established for it. The veterinary field is developing rapidly and it will surely not be long before a new edition, or further supplements, appear.

BOOK REVIEWS

AN INTRODUCTION TO PHARMACOLOGY. By J. J. Lewis. Pp. xii + 826 (including Index). E. and S. Livingstone Ltd., Edinburgh, 1960. 55s.

Need has been felt for a longer textbook of pharmacology, dealing with all the drugs in use in clinical practice and at a price within the means of the undergraduate student. The author has attempted to meet that need in this book which is a careful and comprehensive summary of the chemical structures, the effects and the main clinical uses of drugs. The care with which this book has been written and prepared is obvious; there are exceedingly few misprints. The absence of references which might act as an introduction to the literature, the confinement of the section on quantitative and general pharmacology to one brief introductory chapter, and the emphasis on the overall effects of drugs in preference to mode of action makes this a book much less suitable for the student of science who is reading pharmacology than for the student of medicine.

M. F. LOCKETT.

HALE WHITE'S MATERIA MEDICA, PHARMACOLOGY AND THERAPEUTICS. 31st Edition. By A. H. Douthwaite. Pp. viii + 525 (including Index). J. and A. Churchill, Ltd., London, 1959, 25s.

Knowledge is advancing increasingly rapidly in all branches of medicine. It is probably going to advance more quickly in the future. The knowledge we have already will be superseded in many respects. Consequently, it becomes increasingly difficult to decide what factual material should be put before medical students. The less the better is a maxim which will comfort both the overloaded student and the harassed teacher, and it has the merit that the less purely factual matter is taught, the more time is left to consider the evidence for the facts and the proper weighing of evidence. A student who has learnt how to assess evidence will be an intelligent doctor ten years hence. One who has not will be a mixed-up victim of superseded knowledge and commercial pressure, and his patients will suffer accordingly.

Hale White's Materia Medica is an old book which has maintained its popularity to the extent of thirty-one editions since it first appeared in 1892. The newest edition is up to date in the sense that it deals with drugs such as chlorothiazide and dexamethasone, and traditional in that it preserves its authoritarian approach, giving no evidence for the statements made and no references to places where the evidence can be found. Characteristically, there is no entry in the index for "therapeutic trial", "clinical trial" or "trial" and it does not appear that this crucial subject is discussed at all. Nor is there any reference to the effects of dummy medication in health and disease, in spite of their fundamental importance in evaluating therapeutic efficiency. It does not appear, in fact, that the statements in the book are based on scientific evidence at all, and it does not encourage the search for such evidence. This book is not therefore to be recommended.

M. WEATHERALL.

BOOK REVIEWS

METHODEN DER ORGANISCHEN CHEMIE (Houben-Weyl). Fourth Edition. Edited by Eugen Müller. Volume 1, Part 2. Allgemeine Laboratoriumspraxis. Pp. xlviii + 1017 (including Index and 680 illustrations). George Thieme Verlag, Stuttgart, 1959. Moleskin, DM 196.00.

The second part of volume I, like its counterpart which appeared some 18 months ago, is devoted to the technique of general laboratory practice. Although it contains much of general interest to all laboratory workers, it will be of special interest to those engaged in pharmaceutical work. The first few chapters present an excellent summary of the problems of comminution; sifting of solids; the mixing of gases, liquids, powders and plastics; emulsions, emulsifying agents; foams and antifoaming agents. The remainder of the volume covers a range of practical techniques for the preparation, purification, handling and storage of materials with special reference to problems of physical state. The subject matter ranges over methods of working with gas streams the use of condensed gases (ammonia, sulphur dioxide and hydrofluoric acid); explosives; small-scale methods; working under anaerobic or anhydrous conditions, under pressure and under vacuum; the measurement, recording and regulation of temperature; drying agents and the purification of organic solvents. The chapter on laboratory accidents and the danger of carcinogenesis completes an extremely useful manual, and provides a useful reminder of the care which is always necessary in laboratory work. The volume is excellently referenced, up to date and beautifully presented in the same excellent style of its predecessors in the series.

J. B. STENLAKE.