

Reviews

PROBLEMS OF AGEING: BIOLOGICAL AND MEDICAL ASPECTS.—Edited by E. V. Cowdry. 1939. Baillière, Tindall and Cox, London. Pp. xxx plus 758. Illustrated. Price, 45s.

AGEING has become a serious social problem. In the United States the time is not far ahead when one-third of the population will be over 50 years of age. In this mechanical age, the market value of experience, the main asset of the aged or middle-aged, is decreasing, and consequently there is more unemployment amongst this group than amongst the younger and more energetic members of society. This has led to attention being paid to the subject of ageing, and it is surprising how very poor our literature on this subject is. The present volume is the beginning of an attempt to fill this gap.

The scope is a wide one; it ranges from the ageing of protozoa to that of man's various systems, tissues, and organs, and includes chapters on the ageing of trees, insects, and vertebrates. Each chapter is contributed by an expert and the subjects are so specialized that in only one case has a contributor written more than one chapter. Most of the contributors are Americans, but Dr. Macdonald Critchley of King's College Hospital has written the chapter on ageing of the nervous system.

Trees vary considerably in their rate of ageing, as there are some quite large varieties that under certain conditions grow and age in a matter of a decade or so, whilst at the other end of the scale we have the great tree of Tule which is variously estimated at 5,000 to 7,000 years old. Man's rate of ageing varies, but not to this extent! However, sufficiently to make hard-and-fast rules regarding the age of retirement, in certain professions where experience is an asset, ridiculous.

Different subjects have demanded different lines of approach. In the matter of the ageing of the male and female reproductive organs there is a good deal of data on which to base the discussion, though the writers on these subjects deplore the paucity of this data, but in others there is practically none. Perhaps the most difficult and the most interesting chapter is on tissue fluids; there is a very great deal of valuable information on tissue fluids, the importance of which is now being appreciated, but in the matter of ageing there is little more than an indication how this may be studied. However, the facile and witty pen of the editor of this series, who himself contributes this chapter, has made it a most readable one.

The final chapter is on the clinician's point of view; in this chapter amongst other things is an analysis of the ailments of 300 patients over the age of 60 who have come to the writer's clinic for investigation. These patients constitute 10 per cent of the total attendance, but the age tails off rapidly, as only three are over 80. Presumably those over eighty are more inclined to accept their ailments as facts, and prefer not to be interfered with.

This is an important book, being in its way a pioneer publication on a new line of study, and as such we can strongly recommend it.

AN INDEX OF TREATMENT.—By Various Writers. Edited by Sir Robert Hutchison, Bt., M.D., LL.D., P.R.C.P. Assisted by Reginald Hilton, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P. Twelfth Edition. 1940. John Wright and Sons Limited, Bristol. Pp. xv plus 996. Illustrated. Price, £2-2-0

THIS book was first published in 1907 and scored a success which can seldom have been equalled in the history of medical publication in Great Britain, as within one year it went through no less than four editions. After this presumably the publishers learnt to print larger editions. The present edition is published after an interval of four years, and, as they

have been very eventful years, the revisions have been numerous and extensive.

There are about eighty contributors, recruited from the cream of British hospital and consultant practice. This makes criticism of the individual sections difficult. The majority of the tropical diseases are in the able hands of Dr. P. Manson-Bahr, so that an often fruitful field of criticism has been largely removed. We must however remark that 'anæmia, tropical' is a poor heading for a section. We doubt the existence of such a condition and, with regard to the statement that 'secondary anæmias' due to a sedentary life are common, we do not agree with the classification, the ætiology, or the fact. We do not think that injections of iron should be recommended in secondary anæmias. The sub-heading ankylostomiasis, as distinct from secondary anæmia, seems a little difficult to justify; but in the treatment of this condition we are pleased to see that thymol is not recommended, though we are sorry that there is no mention of tetrachlorethylene. This section heading should be abolished or the section completely re-cast.

All sections have been revised and a few new ones added, so that this invaluable publication has been brought up to date. The revisions justify the replacement of the last edition by the present one for those who can afford the cost; we beg them not to throw away their earlier edition, but to give it to a poorer friend; it should serve him for many years yet.

CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE.—By J. W. Brown, M.D. (Lond.), M.R.C.P. 1939. John Bale Medical Publications Limited, London. Pp. xvi plus 255. Illustrated. Price, 21s.

THE subject of congenital heart disease has been attracting increasing attention during recent years. The pioneer work of Maude Abbott is responsible for the marked advance of knowledge of this intriguing subject. We are no longer justified in conjuring up a picture of a cyanosed undersized child of indifferent mental development when thinking of congenital heart disease, nor in regarding anatomical diagnosis of most cases as a matter for the post-mortem room.

In this book the author has presented us with a brief account of the various congenital heart diseases. He has described in detail the embryology and morphology of the human heart, the ætiology, frequency, and the various types of congenital anomalies of the heart, their clinical features, electrocardiographic and radiologic course, and prognosis. There are chapters on infective endocarditis, special cardiological methods of examination, differential diagnosis, general prognosis and treatment.

There are numerous well-chosen illustrations, a large number of which are original. The different sections are well written.

The book will prove useful to cardiologists.

P. C. S. G.

COMBINED TEXTBOOK OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNÆCOLOGY: FOR STUDENTS AND MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS.—Revised and Rewritten by J. M. Munro Kerr, LL.D., M.D., F.R.F.P. & S. (Glas.), F.R.C.O.G., R. W. Johnstone, C.B.E., M.A., M.D., M.R.C.P., F.R.C.S. (Edin.), F.R.C.O.G., James Hendry, M.B.E., M.A., B.Sc., M.B., F.R.F.P. & S. (Glas.), F.R.C.O.G., D. Baird, B.Sc., M.D. (Glas.), D.P.H. (Edin.), F.R.C.O.G., J. Young, D.S.O., M.D., F.R.C.S. (Edin.), F.R.C.O.G., D. McIntyre, M.B.E., M.D. (Glas.), F.R.F.P. & S. (Glas.), F.R.C.S. (Edin.), F.R.C.O.G., F.R.S.E., and E. C. Fahmy, M.B., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S. (Edin.), F.R.C.O.G. Third Edition. 1939. E. and S. Livingstone, Edinburgh. Pp. xii plus 1192, containing 499 illustrations and numerous x-ray plates. Price, 37s. 6d. Postage, 10d.

THIS 'combined' textbook of the Scottish medical schools has already earned a sound reputation. This is the third edition and the demand for the book has obviously been satisfactory for each of the earlier editions had to be reprinted.