Books


The welcome appearance in paperback form of the 1963 Little, Brown and Company edition should guarantee a wide audience for this collection of medical curiosities. The 21 selections, with introductory notes by the editor, range from a description of the sixteenth century's mysterious "Sweating Sickness" by John Caius to the 1962 JAMA paper on "Glue Sniffing in Children" by Glaser and Massengale. In between, the epidemiological classics of Panum (measles, 1847), Snow (cholera, 1854), Budd (typhoid, 1873), and Pickles (pleurodynia, 1939) vie with Matthew Carey's work on the 1793 Philadelphia yellow fever outbreak and William Beaumont's Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice and the Physiology of Digestion (1833).

Two papers from the 1961 Journal of the American Medical Association and the New England Journal of Medicine deal with "Stomach Cancer in Iceland" and "The Case of the Perilous Prune Pit," a refreshing autobiographical note on the small bowel meanderings of a fruit's inner core. Samuel Hopkins Adams, a layman who had the unique honor of becoming an associate member of the AMA, discusses the vagaries of Latrodectus mactans—the black widow spider—and Ashley Montagu, an anthropologist, reviews the peculiar mammalian habit of yawning. Cardiology and psychiatry each have two papers to their credit while an extract from Dubos' The White Plague (1952) shows how consumption was regarded during the Romantic Era of the 19th century. Readers interested in philosophy should like Dale's article presenting the medical biography of Immanuel Kant.

Mr. Roueche, whose Eleven Blue Men has received popular acclaim, is author of the New Yorker's "Annals of Medicine." He received a 1961 Albert Lasker Award for his work—an indication of the clarity and accuracy of his writing. In his Curiosities of Medicine, Mr. Roueche has produced not only a most readable and enjoyable volume but also a work of scientific merit from both the historical and contemporary viewpoints.

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The rapid growth of scientific information has made it increasingly difficult for many teaching institutions to do justice to a subject matter in the lecture hall and the student laboratory. As a result, there has to be a certain amount of selection of topics, and at times, some degree of superficiality. More and more study "in depth" must be done by the student in the form of "homework." The conventional way of doing this is by making a thorough study of voluminous textbooks and monographs. Another method is by the use of a self study program. As the student proceeds in his studies, he is required to answer questions and solve problems. As a reward for having given the correct answers, he may continue with the program.

Body Fluids and the Acid-Base Bal-
by Halvor N. Christensen, is such a program of self study written for students of the biological and medical sciences. As any preclinical and clinical lecturer can testify, students at all levels of training all too often encounter difficulties in comprehending biological acid-base problems. In the view of Dr. Christensen, this may result from the "presence of unexpected deficiencies, often minor, over which the student nevertheless cannot easily leap." This self study program, hopefully, may correct the situation. This volume of 506 pages with 1,100 "items," i.e., problems, simple and more difficult ones, covers all the material that any accredited medical school offers its students in this area: pH and Dissociation, Sodium and Chloride Distribution, Potassium and the Cellular Compartment, Calcium and Phosphorus, Gas Transport, Metabolic and Respiratory Aspects of Neutrality Regulation, and Renal Correction of the Neutrality. Written by a very competent biochemist (Christensen is professor and chairman of the department of biochemistry at the University of Michigan), the emphasis of the book is on understanding fluid and acid-base balance in the normal subject. No other subject matter cuts more deeply into all the biological and medical specialties than fluid balance and acid-base regulation. Since this self study program already has stood the test prior to its publication, it is hoped that preclinical and clinical teachers will familiarize themselves with this book and recommend it strongly to their students.

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Doctors Bates and Christie have written a much needed book. Their text, directed chiefly to the internist and the chest physician, is an up-to-date and comprehensive review of respiratory function alterations in disease, correlated with clinical, x-ray, and pathological findings.

The book opens with a brief analysis of methods for evaluation of different aspects of pulmonary function, and a summary of present knowledge of normal structure and function, including a discussion of variations due to posture, age, exercise, and altitude. Then follow several particularly strong chapters on airway diseases (spasmodic asthma, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema), and others on pulmonary cysts, bronchiectasis, atelectasis, diffuse interstitial fibrosis, sarcoidosis, acute infections, and tuberculosis. Separate treatment is also given to pulmonary function in diseases of the chest cage, in heart, collagen diseases, malignancies, and a few other less common entities. The last chapters are devoted to considerations of physiological principles in the management of respiratory failure, and in the evaluation of dyspnea and disability.

The book reads easily, is well indexed by author and subject, and has a wealth of references on practically every topic. My own feeling is that with a Comroe1 under one arm and a Bates and Christie under the other, teachers and practitioners of chest medicine should be extremely well prepared for their tasks.

Sami I. Said, M.D.