BOOK REVIEW


Nine editions in twice that number of years speaks, as it were, volumes for the popularity of "Roxburgh". There have been several post-war competitors in the field but none will wear as long or as well. While of intention restricted in its scope, this is by no means the classical slim volume; perhaps, indeed, the earlier editions held some advantage in being slimmer. But advances in knowledge mean additions and it is always difficult to discard. The additions this time include notes on the antihistamines, BAL, mepacrine and penicillin dermatitis, lichen sclerosus vel atrophicus, and Senear-Usher pemphigus; paragraphs on the ever-changing subjects of penicillin, calciferol, and ointment bases have been given a new look. The standard of the photography is magnificent; the presence of eight colour plates serve largely to emphasize the excellence of the two hundred black-and-white reproductions.

There are nearly forty pages on syphilis and while the student of venereology will turn elsewhere to learn of this disease and its treatment, it is interesting to see how the general practitioner or the medical student will be instructed. It is right and proper that the reader should be directed to a book on venereology for instruction on the treatment of syphilis; the cautious statement that "when the diagnosis has been made then the patient must be treated vigorously for two or more years" is clearly an unamended relic of an earlier edition, but even the venereologist is hard put to it to keep up with the present varied views on treatment. The clinical account of syphilis which follows a somewhat naive introductory section describes the skin and some of the other manifestations stage by stage with a reasonable differential diagnosis interspersed; the account of the skin eruptions is good. The technical simplicity and the value of the dark-field examination of suspected lesions is not adequately stressed; but it never is except in textbooks by venereologists. sane and reasonable general comments are made about the Wassermann reaction. The public health aspects of syphilis are clearly outside the scope of the book, and the other venereal diseases come in for only passing notice or none at all.

From the dermatologist's point of view there are inevitable minor criticisms or differences of opinion; but none of these prevents the opinion that this is as yet the best superficial review of the common diseases of the skin. The venereologist who knows this book will know more dermatology than many of his colleagues, but for the difficult case he will still have to turn to one of the large "Americans" for which no adequate substitute has yet been published in this country.

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Common Skin Diseases

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