BOOK REVIEWS

LATENT SYphilis AND THE AUTONOMIC Nervous SYSTEM. By Griffith Evans. Bristol: John Wright & Sons Ltd., 1937.

A second edition of this book has been published and the author has altered the title so as to emphasise the close relationship between the main lymph chain (where the virus of syphilis lies dormant in the latent period) and the main sympathetic ganglia along the vertebral column. The main contention is that the autonomic nervous system is rendered sensitive by a neighbouring adenitis. Many references are quoted and there is a good presentation of plates, also microphotographs illustrating histological findings in latent syphilis and cancer. Latent syphilis is held responsible for a high proportion of thyroid disease, and to support the evidence quoted, a chapter is devoted to a translation of Engel-Reimers' article on this subject. Allergic conditions, including asthma, vasomotor disturbances, nervous dyspepsia and the chronic abdomen, are all in turn ascribed to destructive infiltration which proceeds from the lymphatic system; even pes cavus is adduced as betraying an underlying nerve disease.

The relation between cancer and latent syphilis is discussed and there are some excellent photographs illustrating certain types of tongue lesions.

Surprise is expressed at the lack of clinical diagnosis of syphilitic aortitis, special reference being made to one of the well known American clinics. It might be opportune to quote a recent paper by Kaplan and Grabfield,* in which the authors investigated their patients clinically and by X-rays and electrocardiogram. The changes demonstrated by the electrocardiogram proved themselves of no significance. In 68 patients with G.P.I. they found only three with definite indisputable aortic insufficiency.

Many of the conclusions arrived at are based on rather slender evidence, and the frequency with which third generation syphilis is recorded is unconvincing in many instances.

The author deplores the reliance placed on the Wassermann reaction. There is no mention of the more sensitive flocculation tests to which surely one should have recourse in face of the limited value of the Wassermann as mentioned by the author.

While admitting that there may be some truth in a non-spirochaetal form of treponema pallidum, little evidence is presented in this book to show that the many syndromes described are really syphilitic in origin.

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