BOOK REVIEWS

Venereal Diseases Described for Nurses. By R. C. L. Batchelor and Marjorie Murrell. 1951. E. and S. Livingstone, Edinburgh. Pp. 217. (12*s.* 6*d.*)

There can be no dispute that there was a need for a book presenting this subject for nurses. There is some difference of opinion on how much nurses need be taught about it, but if a broad view of a nurse's training is taken, the more information she can obtain in a clear and readily accessible form, the better she will be able to serve the community. The nurse has not only to help to heal the sick, often performing highly skilled technical work under medical supervision, but is also one of the most potent teachers of prevention of disease. Her attitude to the patient and to the disease will influence the mind of the sick person even more than the words of the doctor.

The status of the authors is a sufficient guarantee that the information is reliable, full, and based on considerable personal experience. Opinions may vary on some points but the authors state clearly that the methods they advise are those found satisfactory in Edinburgh.

The style is rather pedantic for many student-nurses, who would probably benefit from a greater use of simple summaries. In its present form the book is very suitable for medical students.

A gratifying feature is the attention paid to the nursing care, and to the precautions necessary and unnecessary in the management of venereal diseases. The section on gonorrhoea and vaginal discharges in women is very clear and practical in its detailed instructions.

This book is recommended for the library of every nurses' training school ; it should be read by every sister tutor and by every nurse whose work may include venereal cases.

The illustrations are numerous and good, and will be very instructive. The quality of most of the colour plates is very high. The index is adequate. The printing and paper and format of the book are excellent, and a credit to the publishers. R.L.

Cardiolipin Antigens. By M. C. Pangborn, F. Maltaner, V. N. Tompkins, T. Beecher, W. R. Thompson, and M. R. Flynn. 1951. Pp. 63. World Health Organization Monograph Series, No. 6. H.M.S.O., London. (5*s.*)

When cardiolipin-lecithin-cholesterol mixtures were introduced as antigens in serum tests for syphilis, hopes were raised that standardization of antigens might be possible by the use of fixed amounts of the components. Although these components can be obtained in a high state of chemical purity, different batches of lecithin, and to a lesser extent, of cardiolipin, although apparently identical chemically, were sometimes found to possess different levels of serological reactivity. Serological comparison of new batches of reagents against standard reference antigens is therefore still necessary. The World Health Organization undertook the establishment of reference standards and this monograph describes the methods of examination of antigen components used in the New York State Department of Health Laboratories.

The first two sections describe the methods of preparation of cardiolipin and lecithin and give information about their storage and stability. Clear and detailed descriptions are given of the analytical procedures used to determine the phosphorus content, iodine number, and dry weight.

The third section deals with the serological standardization of cardiolipin antigens, using the Maltaner complement-fixation technique and the New York State Department of Health microscopic slide flocculation test. Details of these two techniques are clearly described. Each new batch of cardiolipin or lecithin is introduced into an antigen, the other two components of which are standard reagents, and the performance of the mixture is compared by the testing of sera in parallel with a reference antigen. The formulae for the antigens for these two tests have been fixed, but details of how these formulae have been arrived at are not given in the text. In the complement-fixation test, an elaborate statistical method is applied to discover when enough data have been accumulated to warrant a decision on the acceptance or rejection of the reagent under test. From the text it is not clear to the reviewer by what standards the criteria on which the analysis is based have been chosen. The statistical method is not applicable to the slide flocculation test, and reliance is placed on the comparative testing of a fixed number of sera, the allowable limits of variation being defined. In both these techniques, rejection of a batch of cardiolipin or lecithin is final, no attempt is made to adjust the reactivity of an antigen by varying its composition or the titre at which it is used.

The monograph ends with a list of 92 references to the literature. Since only a minority of these are referred to in the text, and the titles of the papers are not given, the value of this list is limited. The booklet is well produced and, although primarily intended for workers in specialized laboratories concerned with the standardization of cardiolipin antigens, will be of value to all who are interested in the improvement and standardization of serological tests for syphilis. A. E. W.