BOOK REVIEWS


It is not easy to appraise this little book. Its author's intention has been to provide for medical students and general practitioners a short readable work containing a description of the commoner skin diseases and their treatment.

Dr. Gardiner's wealth of experience in skin diseases is reflected principally in his clinical descriptions, which are well supported by forty-six illustrations and thirteen coloured plates, most of them excellent. His instructions regarding treatment are also, on the whole, practical, simple and helpful. Occasionally Dr. Gardiner's views regarding classification and aetiology would hardly meet with universal acceptance. Alopecia Areata, for example, is included among fungous diseases; while the term seborrhoea is applied indiscriminately to several different conditions including excessive activity of the sebaceous apparatus, dandruff, and what is usually known as seborrhoeic eczema.

The impression gained from reading the book is that discussion on aetiology has been sacrificed for the sake of brevity. This detracts from the interest of the work, which otherwise fulfils its purpose very well.

G. D.

MICROSCOPIC SLIDE PRECIPITATION TESTS FOR THE DIAGNOSIS AND EXCLUSION OF SYPHILIS. By B. S. Kline, A.B., M.D., Chief of Laboratories, Mount Sinai Hospital of Cleveland, Assistant Professor of Pathology, Western Reserve University. Price 13s. 6d. net. Publishers: Ballière, Tindall & Cox, 8 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C. 2.

Accounts of the Kline test for syphilis and of work and experiments in connection with it have appeared from time to time in various medical journals. Here, in "Microscopic Slide Precipitation Tests for the Diagnosis and Exclusion of Syphilis," by B. S. Kline, the whole subject has been brought within the compass of a single small volume.

In 1926 Kline and Young carried out what was practically a Kahn test, but used slides instead of tubes. The results were none too satisfactory, especially at low temperatures, and various modifications were tried. Finally it was determined to study the method of antigen preparation and also of making up antigen emulsions.

First a highly purified extract was prepared in the form of a wax from which the acetone soluble elements had been removed. This is the basis of the antigen emulsion and is dissolved in alcohol; it will apparently keep indefinitely. In the next step—the making up of the antigen emulsion—the Kline test again differs from most flocculation reactions. First the cholesterin is added to distilled water; then the
extract is added and finally the saline. In this way—as pointed out by Eagle—discrete cholesterol particles are first formed and then these are coated with extract (antigen lipoid). These particles are clumped by syphilitic serum, but not by normal serum; it is suggested that the mechanism is similar to that of a specific bacterial agglutination. The author applies his tests for (a) the diagnosis and (b) the exclusion of syphilis, using a very sensitive antigen emulsion for the latter; he employs unheated and heated serum—defibrinated (finger) blood—and cerebro-spinal fluid; in other words, both standard (for diagnosis) and very sensitive (for exclusion) antigen emulsions may be used with each kind of specimen to be tested.

A full description, accompanied by very clear diagrams, is given of each of the tests which are carried out by mixing the reagents inside a paraffin ring on a glass slide. The slide is rotated for the requisite time and the result read at once under the low power (×120) of the microscope. Results are recorded as −, ±, +, or ++.

A supplementary ball test similar to the Muller-Ballung is also described. The Kline test appears to be definitely more sensitive than the most delicate W.R., as is the case with many flocculation reactions. It would appear that it is probably the equal of, if not superior to, any flocculation reaction in sensitivity. As to specificity, opinions differ. The author claims it to equal the W.R., but probably the method employed was not as reliable as the one described by Wyler (No. 1 Method, M.R.C.).

Several workers, including T. H. Miller, in Stokes's Clinic, Chargin and Rosenthal, New York Department of Health, and Hughes at St. Thomas's Hospital, London, have found an undue number of false positives; some at least of these may have been due to impurities in the cholesterol.

Dr. Kline is to be congratulated on having produced a most readable book; the arguments and facts are well set out—Chapter III. on the "Rôle of Antigen" is most thought stimulating. The illustrations are models of clarity, and very helpful in understanding and carrying out the various steps in setting up and reading the tests. There is a fairly complete bibliography.

T. E. O.