

# A Companion To Medical Studies

## Book reviews

A companion to medical studies—in three volumes. Volume I, Anatomy, biochemistry, physiology and related studies. Edited by R. Passmore and J. S. Robson. Oxford and Edinburgh: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1968. Pp. iii+1091. Price, limp cover £4 15s. 0d. Cloth cover £6 6s. 0d.

This is the first volume of a set of three. The second volume on general pathology and pharmacology is expected in August 1969 and the third on Medicine, surgery, obstetrics, therapeutics and social medicine in April 1970.

It is the product of the Edinburgh Medical School and it is the objective that the student will find more than enough in these three volumes to pass the examinations throughout his course. In the book an attempt has been made to break down departmental barriers in each subject in order to avoid unnecessary repetition. This whole concept is exciting but to the reviewer the book does not live up to the prospects. In an attempt to reduce the content of the subjects to a manageable volume, either the subject material has to be condensed or that which seems irrelevant to modern concepts of medical education has to be pruned. The material in many chapters of this volume seems to have been condensed so much that these become virtually unreadable, whilst matter that seems irrelevant remains. Due to this, the volume will have little place on the general practitioner's bookshelf. This might have been expected as it is aimed at undergraduate students but the basic concept is such an exciting one, that one hopes that the second and third volumes, particularly the latter, will achieve more adequately the objectives outlined by the editors.

Society without the father. ALEXANDER MITSCHELICH, M.D. Translated from the French by ERIC MONTAGNER. First English edition. London: Tavistock Publications Ltd. 1969. Pp. xi+329. Price £3 0s. 0d.

Despite the brilliant technical achievements of our civilization, there is a growing sense that it may be in danger of breakdown. This may be because Man's emotional development has lagged behind his intellectual triumphs. This book is a contribution to understanding of why we are in danger; important to all whose concern it is to avoid disaster. Professor Mitschelich is a distinguished psychoanalyst, who uses his analytic knowledge, derived from clinical experience, to put his finger on some of the sources of our difficulties.

A rough and inadequate summary of his argument is that we are coming to the end of a paternalistic society, where authority is imposed from above, and have to learn to adjust to a society of siblings. In analytic terms, instead of subjecting ourselves to the demands of a severe super ego, or, at the other extreme, abjuring responsibility and letting the id run riot, we need to develop our ego, our sense of reality. This involves maturing, giving up superstition and intolerance, and questioning all rules. In Brecht's words, "The custom of thinking afresh in every new situation."

If we are to do this, we must begin with the individual, and especially with the child. Mitschelich indicates that education in human self-respect is the key to progress, and we need both to love and to respect our children. It is interesting that a wise scientist from a different discipline, Konrad Lorenz, in his book *On aggression* writes "A relation of trust and respect between two generations must exist in order to make a tradition of values possible."

This well-translated book is densely written; that is, every sentence demands and deserves critical thought. In this sense it is difficult, but one cannot say difficult things in easy ways. Nevertheless it is profound and rewarding, and within the intellectual grasp of an intelligent layman. This is a constructive book that gives a glimpse of hope to those who see only decay and confusion around, and the more who read it the greater the hope.

Postgraduate medicine. I. J. T. DAVIES, M.B., M.R.C.P. London. Lloyd-Luke (Medical Books) Ltd. 1969. Pp. viii+324. Price £3 0s. 0d.

Dr Davies is senior registrar to The United Cardiff Hospitals, and he is to be congratulated on producing this small textbook of advanced orthodox medicine for candidates seeking a higher diploma. This is not a cramming text, and it will be enjoyed by those many general practitioners who feel the urge for what Sir William Osler called their "quintessential brain-dusting". Not least, it may be helpful to those among their number who are nervous themselves to appear in an unaccustomed rôle as examiners for the membership of The Royal College of General Practitioners.

The author shows a wise modesty in asking in his preface for suggestions from his readers, and as it is to be hoped that the future will see many editions of this book, it should be said at once that the text is deficient in failing to cover important aspects of the genetic components of human illness. To give a single example, the highly complex

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