

A Manual of Pharmacology

By the late Dr. Walter E. Dixon. Revised by W. A. M. Smart. Eighth edition. Pp. viii+483. (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1936.) 18s. net.

W. E. DIXON's well-known text-book has long enjoyed a wide popularity. It is almost the only text-book of pharmacology in the English language of suitable length for those students who regard pharmacology merely as one of the obstacles on the road to a medical qualification. It has always contained a spice of unorthodox and entertaining information which has delighted its readers, and sometimes puzzled their instructors. The seventh edition appeared in 1929, and is now out of date. The eighth edition, prepared by Dr. W. A. M. Smart, represents a drastic revision. The number of figures has been reduced from 97 to 79, but the figure which appears to portray inhibitory nerves to voluntary muscle has been retained.

A large number of chemical formulæ have been inserted, so that it is now possible to find the structure of nearly all drugs of importance. These formulæ are useful for reference, but the detailed chemical structure of most of these substances throws little light on their action, and a knowledge of these details is really only of value to those engaged in research. The bulk of the book has been reduced by the use of a thinner and better paper, but the number of pages is about the same. The general arrangement has not been altered, and the allocation of space to different sections is about the same as before. The chapter dealing with vitamins, hormones, vaccines and sera occupies only fourteen pages. This section might well have been expanded.

It cannot be said that this new edition represents a reliable guide to all the drugs in common use today. There is no mention of the agranulocytosis caused by pyrazolon derivatives or of the action of plasmoquine on the sexual forms of the plasmodium, or of coramine, or dinitrophenol. Salyrgan and mersalyl appear as two different substances. The section dealing with the chemical structure of the cardiac glycosides contains no reference to the cyclopentenophenanthrene skeleton. On the other hand, the book is still the most attractive of its kind. The use of different types for subheadings makes reference easy, and the introduction of a number of prescriptions will probably be a popular feature.

A Modern Biology

By Ernest J. Holmes and Dr. R. Darnley Gibbs. Pp. xvi+272. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1937.) 3s. 6d.

THE introduction of biology into the school curriculum and the School Certificate examination syllabus has resulted in the production of many text-books, several of which tend to regard biology as a mixture of botany and zoology. To many biologists, the division of the subject is regrettable, and the question has been raised whether it is possible to teach biology to a pupil of school certificate stage. It is much easier for a young pupil to grasp concrete facts about

specific plants and animals than to grasp generalizations, but if biology is really to be appreciated then these generalizations must be grasped.

This book is a praiseworthy effort to establish biology on its own feet instead of on botanical and zoological crutches. The subject matter is treated biologically throughout, and in no place is there an obvious separation made into plant and animal work. The result is a very readable book on which it should be possible to base a good course in biology. The authors indicate in their introduction that the book is intended to succeed a course in nature study, in which it is assumed that many structural features of plants and animals will have been studied. On this foundation the authors have built a course, the theme of which is function rather than structure.

The book is well produced, well printed, and beautifully illustrated. At the end of each chapter are suggestions for practical work based on the subject matter of the chapter. The treatment of the subject matter is modern and refreshing, and should be read and carefully examined by every teacher of school biology.

The Hair in Health and Disease:

a New Explanation of Diseases of the Hair, Scalp and Skin and of "Barbers' Diseases" in Particular. By Edward Lawrence. Pp. xvi+181. (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1936.) 5s. net.

THE author of this book is a barber, and he feels that barbers have been badly treated. They have been punished for being dirty and spreading infectious diseases. Stirred by a strong sense of injustice, he says that 'barbers' rash' is not due to germs, and that diseases in general are not due to micro-organisms but to heredity. He adds that medical men, who have testified against barbers, may themselves be responsible for conveying the infection of puerperal fever. He counters dogmatic statements with the lie direct. The relative importance of the different possible factors in the causation of such diseases is not in fact known with certainty. Scientific workers in general are more open-minded than the author supposes, but they are not likely to be convinced by rhetoric.

Statistical Methods for Research Workers

By Prof. R. A. Fisher. (Biological Monographs and Manuals.) Sixth edition, revised and enlarged. Pp. xiv+339. (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1936.) 15s. net.

THIS book has done more than any other to popularize the use of modern statistical methods. Thousands of workers have been taught to use statistical machinery without the burdensome necessity of knowing exactly how it works. Six editions have appeared in twelve years, and the number of pages has been steadily increasing. To facilitate reference the numbering of the sections has been kept constant. It would be convenient if the numbers of the sections could be printed at the top of each page. The book maintains its place as the standard work on its subject for the ordinary scientific worker.