Book Reviews

The Genetics of Neurological Disorders by R. T. C. Pratt, DM, FRCP, DPM, Oxford University Press. 80*s*., 310 pages.

The practising physician is increasingly faced with the problems posed by hereditary diseases. Where one child in a family is affected by a genetically determined disorder he may be asked to predict the likelihood of the disease occurring in other children, or a patient may wish to know the chances of his own disease appearing in his offspring. Naturally, opinions of this sort can be sound only if they are based on a clear knowledge of the hereditary pattern of the disease in question. Many hereditary diseases affecting the nervous system are rare and the pertinent 'genetic facts' may be difficult to find. It is for this reason that many will have reason to be grateful to Dr Pratt for his succinct yet comprehensive review of this complex subject. The book is full of information, all of it directly relevant to the subject. He wisely avoids clinical descriptions, 'save for uncommon disorders or where there is clinical or genetical heterogeneity within a disorder', and thereby keeps the size of the volume within reasonable bounds and avoids repetitious accounts of what is readily available elsewhere. His range is very wide and includes metabolic disorders that may affect the nervous system and diseases of muscle. There are 2,814 references arranged alphabetically at the end of the book, and a very useful appendix grouping the references, by number, under the appropriate chapter headings. In addition, there are selected references to the more common disorders at the end of each section. The production and printing are of high quality and the price is reasonable.

C. J. E.

Extra Pharmacopoeia: Martindale, 25th Edition (Ed. R. G. Todd) The Pharmaceutical Press, 150*s*.

A common problem in hospital practice today is to ascertain what drugs a patient has been taking, since they may produce, as side-effects, clinical features resembling naturally occurring disorders, and may greatly confuse the interpretation of diagnostic tests. Even if the physician learns the names of the preparations, he may not be much wiser, because of the bewildering variety of trade names. In these circumstances he should certainly turn to the

new 25th edition of this well-known reference book. In it he will find information about some 4,600 medicinal substances and proprietary preparations.

The arrangement has been altered in this edition so that the various parts are now contained in one enlarged book, which includes monographs on drugs in current use, briefer statements on obsolescent and obsolete drugs that are periodically resurrected in dubious nostrums, and formulae of numerous proprietary medicines sold over the counter. Wider and more frequent travel means that doctors and pharmacists are now often asked about drugs only in use overseas, but here, too, the *Extra Pharmacopoeia* will probably provide the answer, as its international coverage has been considerably extended, and foreign proprietary names unfamiliar in this country are also given. There is an excellent index, which contains over 32,000 entries. This new edition of Martindale should certainly be in every hospital library and pharmacy, and a physician might be spared much time and frustration if he had a copy at hand in his consulting room.

G. M. W.

An Introduction to Medical Genetics by J. A. Fraser Roberts, MD, FRCP, FRS, 4th Edition, Oxford University Press, 25*s*.

Three editions of a book in eight years is a fine recommendation for its quality. A knowledge of genetics is now essential for all physicians, and many will be thankful to Dr Fraser Roberts for giving them such a lucid account of a difficult subject, probably only dimly remembered from student days. The basic facts of inheritance are described fully, confining the field to matters of direct medical application. The clarity and elegance of the text is enhanced by the pleasing layout and the admirable diagrams and illustrations. The majority of the genetic disorders discussed concern structural deformities and it is a pity that more space is not devoted to the many important hereditary disorders of biochemistry. Moreover, the chemistry of genetic action, so ably reviewed in this Journal by Dr Carter (Vol. 1, p. 167), is not described, so that the keen student will have to read this book in conjunction with the relevant texts on biochemical genetics. Perhaps Dr Fraser Roberts could be persuaded to enlarge his excellent book in the next edition to cover these points; his readers would be even more numerous and better instructed.

A. M.