

Book Notices

The Scientific Basis of Physical Education. By F. W. W. Griffin, M.A., D., B.Ch., Medical Adviser to the Incorporated Lucas-Tooth Boys' Training Fund (Lucas-Tooth Gymnasium, London). With a foreword by Sir E. Kaye Le Fleming, M.A., M.D., B.Ch., Chairman of Council, British Medical Association. Cloth. Price, \$2.75. Pp. 203, with 7 illustrations. New York & London: Oxford University Press, 1937.

This volume approaches the subject of physical education from a new angle, that of the physician who supervises or advises with regard to the program of activities. It reflects very wide reading, as evidenced by the more than 200 references in the bibliography, and includes the most recent work. The material is presented in good form and style and most of it is convincing, the least so being the portion in which the author tries to justify breathing exercises taken as such and without regard to the physiologic needs of the body at the time. Most United States physiologists during recent years have felt that deep breathing should be practiced only in response to the requirements of the body for more oxygen. The physiology and mechanics of exercise are reviewed and the recent investigations from many sources are brought together in small compass. Unusual and significant material includes a discussion of the psychologic aspects of physical achievement, an important phase usually overlooked altogether; and a section presenting some work on optimal rates of exercise, such as walking, in terms of oxygen needs and caloric expenditures, and formulas for calculating the work done in an exercise such as climbing stairs. If some one could only determine the optimal amount of exercise for any individual! Here the busy person interested in really intelligent work in physical education will find material for which he would have to search many long hours if he went to original sources. It is a valuable contribution.

The Thinking Body: A Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man. By Mabel Elsworth Todd. Foreword by E. G. Brackett, M.D. Cloth. Price, \$4. Pp. 314, with 91 illustrations. New York & London: Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 1937.

This is an unusual book in content and in style. It approaches health and posture from the engineering point of view but evidences an exact knowledge of mechanics, anatomy, physiology and posture, as well as considerable psychology and philosophy. The style is terse, forceful, sometimes picturesque, often reminiscent of Victor Hugo. That such a style may sacrifice accuracy at times is shown by this statement at the beginning of chapter VIII: "To breathe is life, without breath we die, to breathe rhythmically is health." This scans well and sounds well but, when one analyzes the thought, one is compelled to doubt whether breathing rhythmically is health always and without the fulfilment of other conditions.

The technical material is presented excellently and thoroughly. It should be helpful to physicians, orthopedists, physical therapists, physical educators—to all who are attempting to aid people in conserving muscular and nervous energy in their daily tasks. However, it is not easy reading for one without technical knowledge and probably is not intended for him. The illustrations are clear and helpful.

A novel and useful emphasis in the work is placed on mental and physical preparation for effort, an emphasis which is given practically by athletic coaches and trainers but hasn't so often been put into words to indicate a prerequisite for the most effective and economical performance. The importance of balance and proper relation of different parts of the body is discussed properly and in detail.

If unfavorable criticisms were to be joined to the vastly more numerous favorable ones deserved there might be two: first, that the title is misleading although catchy, in that the text seems to discuss a body thought about rather than thinking; second, and much more important, that when the author comes to practical applications of her excellent theories she speaks more like a dancer and less like a scientist, more artistically and mystically than clearly. For example, "To balance bodily forces think down the back and up the front. Let the spine drag, but keep the front of the body up. . . . Thinking up the front of the body without lifting any of its bony parts will maintain proper traction." To the neophyte this "thinking" of

a part of the body up without moving it appears difficult and perhaps not quite cricket. But this may be petty caviling and the more expert for whom the book is intended may have no difficulty with it in any part. To them it should be a valuable contribution, and to the reader of average intelligence who is interested in posture a stimulating and thought-provoking work.

Vāgbhata's Aṣṭāṅghrdayasamhitā: Ein altindisches Lehrbuch der Heilkunde. Aus dem Sanskrit ins Deutsche übertragen mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen und Indices. Von Luise Hilgenberg, Dr. med., Dr. phil., und Willibald Kirfel, ord. Prof. für indische Philologie an der Universität Bonn. Erste Lieferung. Paper. Price, 3.50 guilders. Pp. 64. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937.

Of all the great textbooks of Indian medicine the one written by Vāgbhata before the eighth century A. D. was least known in the Western world, as it had never been translated into any European language. Complete English translations of the works of Sushruta and Charaka have been available for some time, and yet the textbook of Vāgbhata enjoyed just as much popularity in India if not even more. More manuscripts have been preserved and more commentaries were written on this than on any other Indian medical book. It was translated into Tibetan and became part of the Buddhist canon of the Lamaic church. The book was written in verse like other similar textbooks of medicine and was memorized by generations of Indian physicians. The present translation is extremely welcome. It fills an important gap in the historical literature of medicine and is an admirable piece of work—the result of the cooperation of Professor Kirfel, who is not only an Indologist but also well versed in the scientific literature of India, and of Dr. Hilgenberg, who besides being a philologist is a physician as well. There is no doubt that the best way to approach such difficult ancient texts is through the close cooperation of philologists and physicians. The Sanskrit text was printed in Bombay in 1891, and the translators have not attempted to render it in verse form. Their prose translation reads smoothly. Drug names and technical terms have been translated, but in each case the Sanskrit term is given in brackets. Difficulties are explained in extensive footnotes. Vāgbhata's book is divided into six sections and 120 chapters dealing with theoretical foundations of medicine, anatomy and physiology, etiology, cures and the preparation of drugs, and ending with chapters on the nursing of children and their diseases, mental diseases, diseases of the eyes and ears, and venereal diseases. The two parts published so far contain the first twenty-five chapters of the book, beginning with interesting definitions. For instance: "Physician, remedy, nurse, and patient are the four factors and in therapy four qualities are attributed to each of them. The physician must be skilful, must have received his science from a most worthy teacher, must have had practical experience and be honest . . . and the patient must be wealthy, devoted to the physician, communicative, and of good character." These first twenty-five chapters discuss hygienic rules, diets and other general treatments, and they are all full of material of greatest interest not only to the history of medicine but to the history of civilization as well.

Textbook of Materia Medica, Pharmacology and Therapeutics. By A. S. Blumgarten, M.D., F.A.C.P., Associate Attending Physician to the Lenox Hill Hospital, New York. Seventh edition. Cloth. Price, \$3. Pp. 845, with illustrations. New York: Macmillan Company, 1937.

The fact that this is the seventh revised and reset edition of this standard book on materia medica, pharmacology and therapeutics for nurses is in itself proof of its established value. It aims to teach nurses "to observe the effects of drugs on patients, to recognize the earliest toxic symptoms, to understand the objectives of the physician in prescribing a remedy, and to administer a remedy in such a manner that the maximum desired effect is obtained." Each chapter is followed by questions of three types: the research type, the unfinished type, and those which emphasize the practical aspects of the subject. There is a rather extensive introduction on the administration of medicines including methods of dose calculation. The book concludes with chapters on medicinal foods and physical therapy. When one contemplates the 778 closely printed pages, the contents of which the pupil of nursing is supposed to assimilate in the relatively few hours she can devote to such study, one wishes that this book were considered merely as a reference handbook.