BOOK REVIEWS

Radiation Hygiene Handbook, 1st ed. Editor in Chief: Hanson Blatz. (Pp. xi + 928 + Index, illustrated. £10 13s. 0d.) London: McGraw-Hill Book Company. 1959.

So rapid has been the growth of the many fields of atomic energy during the past 10 years, that it is well nigh impossible to know what is being done in the numerous disciplines and specialties involved in this new industry and just as difficult to obtain basic information easily in a convenient form. The appearance from the other side of the Atlantic of such a book as this "*Radiation Hygiene Handbook*", of which the Editor-in-Chief is Hanson Blatz, Director of the New York City office of Radiation Control, and formerly of the A.E.C. Health and Safety Laboratory, is therefore most welcome.

Let no one be deceived by the title of "Handbook", for this is a weighty volume of some 500 odd pages packed with a mass of information, supplied by a team of 38 contributors, each a specialist in his own particular field. There is something for all in this book, in so far as it provides an easy source of reference from which to glean basic information about such subjects as "Radiation Protection Regulations", "Sources of Radiation", "Laboratory Design", "Radiation Detection and Measurements", "Industrial and Research Applications", "Medical Radiation Applications", "Nuclear Safety", "Surface Contamination and Decontamination". Altogether there are 23 sections, of which another is "Personnel Control" which deals very succinctly with personnel selection, medical control, medical records, and medico-legal considerations. As will be gathered from the titles of the sections, this book covers a wide range, and this is the great advantage of such a book for which there has been great need.

Merril Eisenbud writes, in a very pertinent foreword, "The interdisciplinary characteristic of the field creates problems of definition and purpose which must soon be solved if the needs of the expanding nuclear industry are to be met. Who is a radiation hygienist (or, for that matter, what is a health physicist)? What should he know, what should he do, where do his responsibilities begin and where do they end? As our second and third generations of scientists and engineers enter this expanding field our definitions must be improved, our standards for professional qualification must be established and our universities must adapt their curricula for the new requirements that the atomic age imposes." Here, indeed, is food for thought!

Some photographs would have helped to enliven the text; as good as the line drawings are, they suffer, as do the numerous graphs, from being reproduced at too small a scale to be easily and readily appreciated. Several tables are also included, but take up too much space in a work of this nature. It would also be a help if the pages

were numbered consecutively from cover to cover for easier reference, instead of being numbered by sections.

It is always a problem to know, not only what to include, but also what to exclude in so protean a work; but our American colleagues have given us a start in this type of radiation hygiene textbook and are to be congratulated on what is no mean feat. Perhaps it may not be too much to hope that we shall see a similar type of compendium compiled in time by our own specialists in this very important sphere of health protection.

N. G. DOUGLAS

A Handbook of Diseases of The Skin, 6th ed. By H. O. Mackey. (Pp. 263; 200 figures. 8s. 6d.) London and New York: MacMillan & Co. Ltd; Dublin: C. J. Fallon, Ltd.

This is, as described, no more than a handbook, and it does not aim at presenting more than a simple overall picture of the subject. Almost all textbooks of dermatology are bad in that they give the impression that dermatology is something divorced from medicine as a whole and to be approached and treated as something quite foreign. Nevertheless, it is necessary for the student and for the practitioner to have some sort of text on the subject and this handbook has the advantages of being brief, phenomenally cheap and well illustrated, a valuable asset in a dermatological work.

The great majority of the illustrations are remarkably good and, though in black and white, convey the nature of the disease as well as most coloured illustrations, if not better. The text of such a book can with advantage be submitted to surgical excisions and graftings by the reader as his experience grows. The simple facts are here as regards essentials but many old-fashioned ideas are carried over from the past and could be deleted, particularly in the sections on aetiology and treatment. It is not always easy to extract the sound and valuable comment which is often present from other matter which is of doubtful value.

The section on industrial dermatoses is compressed but contains many important points. The chapter on nursing is not good. Many would disapprove the "window" cut in an Unna's paste bandage to "dress" the ulcer; nurses should not be encouraged to wear rubber gloves when handling skin diseases; ointment should not be spread with "tongue blades" and the risk of contagion from scabies in outpatients is not a real one.

There are few errors in the text; the book is well presented and is of a convenient pocket size.

JOHN T. INGRAM