

ACHIEVEMENT IN MEDICAL SCIENCE

British Achievement in the Art of Healing (Achievement Book No. 4.) By John Langdon-Davies. Pp. 36. (London: The Pilot Press, Ltd., 1945.) 2s. 6d.

THIS publication is one of a series of Achievement Books, the three preceding issues of which record British achievement in art and music, farming and in aircraft. The author of this issue, Mr. Langdon-Davies, pays a richly deserved tribute to modern medical work. "British medical science", he says in his foreword, "is loosely and illogically organized. In spite of this, there can be no doubt that the British medical profession rose to the occasion and solved the problems of war more successfully than they have been solved before in military history. . . ." Some of the problems which faced those others who were charged with medical service at the battle fronts and the means they adopted to meet them are also illustrated in this publication.

Mr. Langdon-Davies has had to contend with the inevitable limitations of space; but his vivid, experienced writing overcomes this difficulty and he is greatly aided by the remarkable photographs of which the publication is largely composed. The very large number of people, medical and non-medical, who contribute essential things to medical work nowadays, is aptly illustrated by the story of what happened to the shattered leg of a soldier in 1915, 1917 and 1940. In 1915 he very often died; in 1917 his life was more often saved, but he remained a cripple for life; in 1940 he was made fit again for duty and he will return to civil life as fit as anybody, even though a limb may have been lost. To this result medical men, scientific men and others all over the world have contributed, and it would be difficult to find a more magnificent example of the co-operation of men of all nations for the common good.

In the succeeding pages Mr. Langdon-Davies takes us through the training of the soldier, describing the improvements in his nutrition and the psychological examinations which improve morale by recognition of the fact that everybody is afraid in battle and by weeding out those whose mental histories predispose them to what used to be called 'shell-shock'. The treatment of shock and of the burns and injuries due to mines which have been so characteristic of this War, the story of blood transfusion and the management of pain and the now well-known histories of the sulphonamide drugs and of penicillin are well told and illustrated by excellent photographs. Plastic surgery, the closed-plaster treatment of injuries, rest and that vital stage in the healing process upon which increasing emphasis is now being laid, namely, rehabilitation, are each briefly described. The subsequent sections on tuberculosis and its detection by mass radiography, on typhus and its control by D.D.T., on malaria and venereal disease introduce us again to civilian life, for these are some of the gravest problems of that war which never ends, the war waged by disease against soldier and civilian alike. The achievement of that 'positive' health which is the subject of the last section is helped by no national mobilization; no Parliament votes fantastic millions to secure it; but to it modern science goes on quietly contributing new weapons

which we can use or neglect as we wish. Publications like this should help all those who are trying to remove the suffering and loss caused by disease; for they spread sound knowledge; and knowledge removes the fear, apathy and uninstructed individualism which are among the root causes of so much ill-health and consequent inefficiency and unhappiness all over the world. G. LAPAGE.

PHARMACOGNOSY

A Textbook of Pharmacognosy

By T. C. Denston. Fourth edition. Pp. xviii+594. (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1945.) 27s. 6d. net.

THIS text-book of pharmacognosy has already found wide recognition among teachers and students of pharmacy. Its subject matter has grown from a laboratory manual intended for use in practical classes, and now comprises the requirements for the Chemist and Druggist Qualifying Examination of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain.

The accounts of the various drugs are systematized and include biological and geographical sources, plant habits, methods adopted in cultivation, collection and preparation for marketing, chief constituents and instructions for practical work. Under the last heading are given schematic descriptions of the drugs and also qualitative chemical tests. The line-drawings are a valuable addition to this section of the work, emphasizing as they do the characters on which recognition is based, and acting as a guide to clear and accurate representation of morphological characters to the student in his own drawing. With the description and the drawings before him, the student can examine a commercial sample of a drug and then proceed to record his own observations.

The organized drugs are classified according to their morphological nature so that they can readily be compared. This is advantageous when points of difference have to be memorized for examination purposes. The drugs of animal origin are grouped together, and the unorganized drugs are arranged according to their similar properties. There is also useful information on drug constituents, stabilization, drying, preservation and adulteration of drugs. The subject matter of this edition has been extended to include the requirements of the addenda to the British Pharmacopœia. Halibut liver oil now receives notice; but the section on the vitamins has been deleted. Mention is made of the effect of war conditions on drug supplies. Additional reproductions of photographs add interest to an already well-illustrated text.

It is unfortunate that considerations of economy have necessitated production on paper of poorer quality than that of previous editions, and that, in spite of this, the price has had to be raised to 27s. 6d. from 20s. These are circumstances over which the author and publishers have no control, and they do not in any way impair the value of the information presented to the reader. The text-book is of convenient size and serves the purpose for which it is intended. It can be confidently recommended to students entering upon the study of pharmacognosy, and particularly to those who are candidates for the chemist and druggist qualification.

W. O. HOWARTH.