

RARE MALIGNANCY

Choriocarcinoma

The Clinical Biology of the Trophoblast and its Tumours. By K. D. Bagshawe. Pp. xii+360. (Arnold: London, July 1969.) 120s.

THIS monograph is a useful addition to the literature on choriocarcinoma and is probably the most complete review of the subject and its literature yet published. The author, who has had the valuable experience of building up a special unit for the study of this relatively rare disease, is well able to describe and discuss all the practical points in diagnosis and treatment. He has obviously read and digested the literature very fully and gives no fewer than 1,200 references, which are wisely isolated in a chapter at the end. The book is fully illustrated with good reproductions of X-ray negatives, microfilms and diagrams.

In the introduction, the author rationalizes the approach to the treatment of choriocarcinoma and uses the particular to discuss chemotherapy of malignant disease in general. The numbering of each separate sub-heading in each chapter and the frequent quotation of patients' case numbers, although there is no appendix containing a documentation of the cases, give the chapters a numerical appearance which can be a little irritating and seems to have little practical value. There are a few faulty captions to the many illustrations, and in the description of some cases the names of surgeons who performed routine operations are mentioned for no apparent reason.

Apart from these minor shortcomings, the book is well planned and well written and produced. In the second half of the book, chapters eleven to sixteen inclusive, the principles and practice of cytotoxic therapy for tumours in general are discussed. This makes it of greater interest to clinicians, who may rarely have the opportunity to see cases of choriocarcinoma because this relatively uncommon form of malignancy should usually be treated in a specialized unit such as the one described by the author.

This book, with its wide spread of interest, should therefore be of value not only to the trained oncologist who will be treating choriocarcinoma but also to those concerned with the somewhat chequered advance of medicine in the treatment of malignant disease.

P. E. THOMPSON HANCOCK

PROBLEMS OF BLINDNESS

Blindness Research

The Expanding Frontiers. Edited by Maxwell H. Goldberg and John R. Swinton. (A Liberal Studies Perspective.) Pp. xvi+544. (Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park, Pennsylvania, and London, September 1969.) \$12.50; 119s.

THIS book contains the formal papers and summaries of discussions of a conference held in 1967. The contributors were "practitioners", administrators of services-to-the-blind agencies and academics, and the topic was that area of blindness research which is the domain of the "soft" rather than the "hard" sciences. The format of the conference was to ask an expert in a particular area, for example, motivation, to survey the present state of the art in general and against the widest possible background, and then to have more specialized experts deal with the same area as it relates to blindness. There are lots of things to criticize in this collection of papers; for example, the initial decision of the organizers of the meeting to exclude any papers relating to "hard" matters such as medical advances, reading devices, and the whole field of mobility; the repeated inability of speakers from outside the special area of blindness to refrain from speculating—quite unnecessarily—about the problems and the nature of blindness; the failure to bring out the inherent contradiction that the blind in order to be able

to cease to belong to an identifiable minority group must—in most cases—first be identified with that group; and the failure to explain the impossibility of solving the educational problems of blind youngsters without also solving the occupational ones.

But against this must be set the almost wholly successful attempt to have a forum of discussion in which many of the very real problems of blindness were discussed in a broadly based, rational and sympathetic manner. Here there was a true attempt to "relate the university-based research with the agency needs, and agency research to the knowledge of the total university".

One may of course disagree with that as a desirable aim. But those of us who think it desirable can find plenty to ponder about in this book. There is the wealth of material presented in terms of bibliographies and discussed with critical appraisal by the authors of the various papers. There are outstanding chapters on adolescence and on job opportunities by Davis and Yoder respectively. And there is, right throughout the book, example after example of the difficulties inherent in bringing together those who view matters more theoretically and those who have to deal with the problems on an everyday basis.

In the United States, almost everybody concerned with solving the problems of blindness is committed to an approach expressed magnificently by a senior administrator: "If we can sensibly join the research skills of the university staff with the knowledge and research skills of the agency staff, then most assuredly we shall be in a strong position to develop applicable research and experimentation that will solve the problems with which we are now faced" (Yoder, page 442). Perhaps they do arrange matters rather better there in this respect.

J. A. LEONARD

REACTIONS OF SIMPLE MOLECULES

Gas Kinetics

By G. L. Pratt. Pp. ix+246. (Wiley: London and New York, August 1969.) 70s cloth; 45s paper.

THIS book is designed to meet the needs of chemistry undergraduates whose course on kinetics concentrates on the homogeneous, gas-phase reaction of simple molecules. Its contents are divided into four chief sections: basic kinetics, experimental methods, theories of elementary reactions and chain processes.

Some trouble is taken to clarify theoretical points which are often treated unsatisfactorily in standard physical chemistry textbooks, and, to take two examples, the quasi-equilibrium concept and the transmission coefficient in transition state theory are both clearly explained. A convincing account is also given of unimolecular reaction rate theory, but, although Dr Pratt acknowledges the revival of interest in collision theory resulting from experimental studies of the molecular dynamics of reactions, I found the section describing the application of collision theory to bimolecular reactions less satisfying. The relationship between the ordinary specific rate constant and the reaction cross-section can be established using quite simple concepts and mathematics, and, in view of the growing importance of crossed molecular beam experiments, I believe that the "hard-sphere" versions of collision theory should now be fully explained in undergraduate texts.

At one or two other points in the book, an understandable desire to limit the length of the book has led to oversimplifications which the student may find puzzling. For instance, the combination of text and potential energy diagram seems to imply that either ground state ($^2P_{3/2}$), or excited ($^2P_{1/2}$), iodine atoms can be produced exclusively when HI is photolysed. In fact, as a perceptive student will realize, a mixture is always produced