Book Reviews

LES AUTO-MUTILATEURS. ETUDE PSYCHO-PATHOLOGIQUE ET MÉDICO-LÉGALE. By Dr. Charles Blondel. Jules Roussel, Paris.

Self-mutilation has always been an interesting pathological manifestation. Singular and dramatic in its effects, complex and obscure in its causes, it is, says Blondel, at the same time rare enough to attract lively interest and frequent enough not to discourage scientific research.

In this small volume of 132 pages he has collected a mass of information bearing on a variety of forms. Voluntary castration; enucleation of the eyes; voluntary burning; direct and indirect forms of mutilation; mutilation to avoid military service, etc.

The reading of this collection impresses one more and more with the psychopathic character of these auto-mutilators and brings into strong relief the fundamental picture of dementia præcox in the Kaepelian sense, as an underlying mental state in the vast majority of these auto-mutilators. Alcoholism, senile dementia, general paresis, epilepsy, hysteria and manic-depressive insanity contribute to the number, but dementia præcox is perhaps the most widespread affection in these sufferers.

One of the most interesting series of observations is in relation to religious ecstasy and self-mutilation. Blondel's observations contribute another side light to the pathological nature of some forms of religious conduct.

The work is full of interest and is a useful summary of much modern literature.

JELLIFFE.

LES DOCTRINES MÉDICALES. LEUR ÉVOLUTION. Par E. Boinet, Professeur de Clinique médicale, Agrégé des Faculté de Médecine. E. Flammarion, Paris.

In medicine, dogmas and doctrines have played a large and important rôle. Doctrines, being wider than theories, came to engulf them and develop into large and synthetic systems which may, in time, become the guiding directing principles of scientific and practical medicine. There are no practical medical systems, says Bouchard, without doctrines. Thus they come to constitute the steps on which medical science advances, and it is the author's task to discuss some of the more important of these progressions, tracing the doctrines which have contributed most to the evolution of medical science. Notwithstanding the number, the variety, the diversity, or the brevity of the reign of many medical doctrines, each in its time has contributed something to the edifice of the present or has enlarged the horizon of medical thought. Thus he traces the fundamental conceptions of the early Hippocratic schools and the Greek and Latin successors, following which there is presented a short chapter on the history of the compilation period of the middle ages and the part played by the Arabs in this time. The renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries follows, in which the influences of the new anatomical and physiological studies are traced, with the philosophic doctrines of Bacon and Descartes, the physico-chemical ideas of the eighteenth century, and the newer vitalistic ideas of the Montpellier school. The rise of the cell doctrine is briefly reviewed and an excellent résumé given of the microbian doctrines and the Pasteurian era in medicine. Final chapters discuss epidemic diseases, the influence of the soil, auto-intoxication, heredity, modern humoral ideas and the application of modern ideas to therapeutics and hygiene.

In this little volume we see the very excellent presentation of that most necessary topic, a general view of the direction of medicine. It is well and interestingly done, and worthy of special praise.

JELLIFFE.