
Surgeons and anatomists who have appreciated Professor Mitchell’s researches into the anatomy of the autonomic system as they have appeared in anatomical and surgical journals during the past eighteen years will appreciate still more the collected work in one volume, beautifully illustrated and accompanied by a very full bibliography of the subject. The book is an exhaustive study by a master who has not only laboured hard and long at what must often have been tedious and exacting dissection, but who has also achieved a literary triumph by blending his own work with the researches of numerous other workers into a book which is at once scientifically sound, and pleasant to read. He has clearly intended it to be used as a book of reference rather than as a work which will be read from cover to cover, and this has necessitated a certain amount of repetition in order to make every subsection self-contained. We have not been able to discover any omissions, and answers can be found to most of the numerous anatomical problems which students and also surgeons engaged in this particular field have had difficulty in understanding. We are not sure whether Professor Mitchell’s views on autonomic afferents can be included in this generally laudatory criticism, for it seems to us clearer to regard fibres originating from dorsal spinal root ganglia or their homologues as distinct from autonomic fibres, even though they may be bound up together in the same nerve bunch. It is interesting that his argument for regarding visceral afferents as autonomic afferents is the only section of the work in which his style, generally most pleasing, becomes vehement—somewhat reminiscent of the gesticulations to distract attention from the weaker part of a sermon!

The illustrations, both photographs and drawings, are beautifully clear and do the publishers great credit. Incidentally they convey a sense of satisfaction that the methods of micro-dissection, which have been so harshly criticised by anatomists who ought to have known better, have been so thoroughly vindicated.

There are large portions of the work, particularly those dealing with the cerebral connections of the autonomic system, which are not at present the direct concern of the surgeon, though it behoves him to know something of the higher centres which control the more peripheral portions of the autonomic system upon which he may be operating. The detailed account of these central connections must be of the greatest possible value to neurophysiologists, and to them as well as to clinicians the work can be warmly recommended.—J. Paterson Ross.


In its capacity of an orthopaedic Baedeker this book certainly covers a huge territory but the inevitably short reference to each subject, irrespective of its relative importance, raises each village to the size of a capital city. Only a small portion of the book can fairly be said to concern itself with fundamentals, and such items are neither clearly specified nor treated as fully as they deserve. Among the forty-six pages devoted to many unusual congenital affections, congenital dislocation of the hip is dealt with in four pages containing seven illustrations; the treatment advocated for the condition is almost purely conservative, the use of the arthrogram is not mentioned, and the decision to perform an open reduction of the hip rests apparently on an arbitrary age limit. Spina bifida is rather summarily dismissed as a subject entirely within the province of the neurosurgeon. The general discussion of skeletal tuberculosis contains views which are unexceptionable, but Pott’s paraplegia receives scant attention and there is no allusion to the more mechanistic explanation of the condition and the consequent need for surgical intervention. The chapters on affections of bone, tumours and allied disorders are much happier and form a quick and easy source of reference in aiding the diagnosis of less routine clinical problems. Neurology is adequately covered and the
Section on cerebral palsy is good and gives a balanced précis of modern views on the subject and recognises that its management far exceeds the scope of orthopaedic surgery.

The diagrams illustrating the second half of the book, which is concerned with trauma, are naive but self-explanatory. The treatment of fractures is made easy by furnishing statutory prescriptions, many of which are not in accordance with teaching in this country; few orthopaedic surgeons here would agree that the ideal internal suture for fracture of the radius and ulna is intramedullary wiring. It is odd that in a chapter on immobilisation there is no mention of the Thomas splint; but the chapter on prosthetics, braces and shoe corrections is very useful. It is regrettable that the guillotine amputation is still advocated as an emergency measure, although wartime experience of pulling down recalcitrant skin to furnish indifferent flaps proved such a nightmare that the operation was shown to be as time wasting and lowering in the patient's health and morale as it is anachronistic.

It is unlikely that this book will have much appeal for the established orthopaedic surgeon, and for the tyro it offers a wealth of material in the form of a treacherous morass through which the narrow path of safety is but faintly indicated.—John M. P. Clark.


During the years immediately after the war, the Ministry of Pensions, with an enlightenment not always seen in Government departments, not only empanelled a Standing Advisory Committee on Artificial Limbs, but provided research facilities at Roehampton so that there should be no marking time in the design and manufacture of artificial limbs.

This Committee has done continuous and valuable work, details of which can be found in its five reports so far published. The Research Department has proved so valuable that it has, in the interim, been completely rehoused and re-equipped, and has a considerable staff fully occupied in the improvements in design, materials, production, fitting and usage of artificial limbs.

Of particular interest is the emphasis on suction sockets for above-knee stumps. These sockets were almost abandoned in this country about thirty years ago, but the cause for this failure has now been overcome by improvements in the valve to control the air pressures. Each valve is tested, manometrically calibrated, set and stamped with the individual's own setting, so that postal replacements are possible. The only two limb-fitting centres so far equipped to supply suction sockets are at Roehampton and Leeds.

Much work has been done on corset-fitting for women, various designs of mechanical hands—still an obstinate problem—varieties of appliances for artificial arms, and toilet appliances mounted on rubber sleeves to enable the handless to bath unaided. It is not possible even to list the subjects under review, but it is encouraging to hear that every suggestion for improvement, whatever the source, receives thorough consideration, and, if promising, design, manufacture and testing in prototype.

The advent of the National Health Service laid on the Ministry of Pensions the responsibility of supplying all artificial limbs, more than doubling its obligations, and the wider placing of contracts raised grave problems of standardisation. It is good to read that a special committee has been appointed to collaborate with the British Standards Institution in this matter and we hope for an early report.

Two defects are unfortunate: there is no reference to the problems in fitting children; and the development of laminated plastics in lower limb sockets receives low priority. This might well overcome the difficulty that wooden suction sockets tend to split, though some success here has been achieved with built-up wooden ones; plastics other than polyvinyl chloride are suitable, as Scales has shown.

A final note of commendation and anticipation concerns the punch-card coding that the Committee has instituted. Over 16,000 cases are fully recorded, and the analysis of this material will throw very much light on the problems, both surgical and technical, that are constantly confronting all who are engaged in this work. We look forward to an early authoritative publication, based on these significant statistics, to guide our hands in the treatment of those requiring amputation in the future.—F. G. St Clair Strange.