Book Reviews


This new text-book on orthopaedic surgery is produced by a famous orthopaedic surgeon, now retired, but who believes that at the end of an active career he has acquired some knowledge worthy of being handed on. The author is dogmatic; a dogma is never universally acceptable, and he says, "I expect many orthopaedic surgeons to disagree with my views." He has underlined the principles of operations rather than the methods, while "pathology is skimmed over, since, in orthopaedics, it is in its infancy."

The book is on a regional basis, but there are additional sections on bone, nerves, and one on muscle, tendon and synovium. In the description of Paget's disease the belief is expressed that heart failure as a complication may be a coincidence. Ultra-violet rays are recommended for pain.

There is a good chapter on manipulative surgery and in it the claim is made that a prolapsed disc may be replaced by manipulation, and this is the logical method of treatment especially as only three out of four are cured by operation. The author states that bone-setters do sometimes cure recurrent dislocation of the shoulder by breaking down adhesions.

In degenerative forms of arthritis relief is claimed for lactic acid injection into the joint, which is said to produce its benefit by increasing the lubrication of the joint, by its anaesthetic effect, and by altering the pH of the joint fluid, but in any case it does diminish pain "in some mysterious manner."

For the "frozen shoulder" rest in a sling is advised, but active movements are not encouraged. No mention is made of the association of biceps tendinitis, or, of course, anything about pathology. A new form of intra-articular arthrodesis of the tuberculous shoulder is shown in a good radiograph, where nature rather than the operation may eventually fuse the joint.

The views of the author on congenital dislocation of the hip are interesting. It is doubtful whether reduction should be attempted after the age of three since attempts at reduction after that lead to so much stiffness and pain. Though some surgeons rely on traction in abduction for children before the age limit, most surgeons, it is said, reduce by manipulation under anaesthesia; this is recommended, and a description is given of the method used by Denucè. Maintenance is by a frog plaster case. The complications of congenital dislocation of the hip are well described, as would be expected.

For the retention of a slipped upper femoral epiphysis a Smith-Petersen nail is still used. For the operative relief of symptoms in osteoarthritis of the hip arthrodesis with osteotomy is the operation of choice, and osteotomy second only to arthrodesis, and, for the old, simple excision of the head. It is good to read that Lambrinudi's operation for claw foot is recommended even though it is "tedious and finicky." For hallux valgus excision of the metatarsal head has the advantage of removing the deformity, and a radiograph is shown of the operation. The removal of an important weight-bearing point apparently causes no worry. Another interesting operation for hallux valgus is shown in a radiograph—amputation of the fifth ray.

Ankylosing spondylitis is dealt with adequately, including a radiograph of a very good operation for kyphosis. In fusing a spine for tuberculosis the technique is standardised and two stout grafts are fixed to either side of the spinous processes by screws or bolts.

This is a beautifully produced volume and the illustrations are amongst the best in any text-book. The radiographs do not compare so unfavourably with the originals as the author suggests, and the small enlargements are a new feature and most helpful.

It is not clear for whom the book is written—probably for the undergraduate since there is little pathology or operative technique. The book as a whole, in any case, is rather too sketchy and controversial for the postgraduate as the examiner might not fancy all the fads that the author admits to in his preface.—Walter Mercer.

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