Book Reviews


This most important new textbook of orthopaedic surgery has the immense advantages accruing from a single author. It is likely to be one of the most successful major textbooks in our speciality of recent years.

It is concerned with orthopaedic problems in children, both from disease and trauma. It is well published with excellent and meaningful photographs. A few are upside down; this is because a postal strike interfered with correction of proofs at the crucial stage.

Reading those parts of the book concerned with subjects with which one is particularly familiar reveals an author who is widely read, who has the capacity to assimilate the essential points of published work and to put them together with a considered and estimable judgment of their relative values. In a few instances I would have liked to have seen the author a little more critical of traditional treatment, treatment that has been accepted without proof for many years, most particularly in the care of various minor deformities of infants’ feet.

I believe one can hardly over-praise this magnificent book and the author has to be congratulated on his skill and industry. How does he find time to do it!—J. I. P. James.


This book is intended for those who look upon amputation not as an admission of surgical failure to preserve an extremity, but as a positive method of treatment, the aim of which is the creation of a new organ—the stump—which, in conjunction with a modern prosthesis, will serve as a new viable and functional whole.

In the fairly lengthy opening chapter, which deals with the development of amputation surgery through the ages, due credit is given to the work of Ertl and Mondry who pioneered the myoplastic and osteo-myoplastic amputation techniques. Not unnaturally so, as the author himself has become known as a vigorous campaigner for restoring muscular equilibrium to the remnant of the limb which enables it not merely to receive but also to activate the man-made substitute for the human limb.

The technique of amputation at all possible levels of the lower extremity is described most minutely and supported by clear and more than adequate illustrations. Unfortunately the regional chapters suffer from far too much repetition of minor detail. Few surgeons wish to be lectured repeatedly on how to attach sterile towels, when to change blades and gloves and where to place their assistants.

Dr Dederich recommends spinal anaesthesia as the method of choice in all amputations, a statement which will be hotly debated by many. This should of course be seen in the light of the fact that skilled anaesthetists are still few and far between in Germany; Dr Dederich himself gives the clue by stating his concern for patients kept under prolonged anaesthesia by nursing sisters.

The concluding chapter is entirely devoted to the method of immediate post-operative fitting of prostheses. The detailed description is relevant to the functions of the plaster technician and prosthethist rather than those of the surgeon. Of considerable significance however is the evaluation of the final results of the method by which 109 patients were treated. Only eleven had primary amputation whereas ninety-eight had re-amputation. The overwhelming majority of cases (103) were post-traumatic and in only six cases did peripheral vascular disease lead to amputation. Moderate to severe post-operative infection supervened in eighteen cases. Dr Dederich rightly stresses the benefit of early mobilisation and control of stump oedema due to the immediate application of a provisional prosthesis. On the other hand his patients treated by immediate fitting had to spend fifty-eight days in hospital as against forty-three required by patients treated by conventional methods.