BOOK REVIEWS


The XIth volume of the Beiträge contains a symposium on the diagnosis and treatment of early ankylosing spondylitis. This symposium marks the 550th anniversary of the foundation of the higher faculty of medicine in the Karl-Marx University, Leipzig (sic). It opens with the usual but nevertheless interesting historical survey and ends with a discussion largely devoted to the problem of calcification in the spinal column.

Two more papers help to complete the 80 pages of this volume. One of these, from Bad Elster, deals with the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis by mud baths. The criteria for objective assessment are carefully tabulated and seem to be impressive; so, too, are the results. It is suggested that a period of 6 weeks is required to obtain a good result. It is therefore tempting to speculate on the effect of a 6-week period of physical and mental rest on a case of rheumatoid arthritis (sans mud). However, mud and massage are so inseparable in Spa treatment that the following lines, written by Rupert Brooke in another context, seem not inappropriate:

Whose intricate fingers beat and glide
In felt bewildering harmonies
Of trembling touch; and music is
The exquisite knocking of the blood.
Space is no more, under the mud.

The last paper covers the vexed question of the “septic focus”—in this case, dental sepsis in rheumatoid arthritis. Arguments, statistics, and case-histories fly thick and fast, but in the final analysis it may be accepted that the arthritic does not benefit from retaining his dental sepsis and may, not infrequently, be better off without it.

As in previous volumes, print, paper, and photographs are excellent. No index is provided, but there is a table of contents and each paper is followed by the relevant bibliography. The “Beiträge” have a character of their own and the XIth volume is a worthy companion to its predecessors.

DAVID PREISKEL


To-day’s upsurge of interest in the surgical management of rheumatoid arthritis assures a welcome to any book which will guide surgeons and physicians through the formidable complexities of this field. Dr. Marmor’s book, largely a treatise on surgical technique, opens with three short chapters about the disease in general and its medical and surgical management. It is to be hoped that no clinician will accept this as sufficient to equip him for the task of caring for a disease so varied in its problems and complications. Condensation has shorn the American Rheumatism Association diagnostic criteria of their essential complement of excluding factors, and a Table detailing the ARA nomenclature and classification of arthritis and rheumatism is irrelevant when differential diagnosis is hardly discussed.

The author is at his best in describing surgical technique. Descriptions of operative methods for individual joints are proceeded in each case by a useful review of surgical anatomy. Quality has been somewhat sacrificed to quantity in the illustrations. Though the anatomical pictures, mainly culled from Gray’s “Anatomy”, and the line drawings are clear, many photographs and radiographs are so lacking in clarity as to offer little contribution and one radiograph of the neck is upside-down. The value of early synovectomy is stressed, but it is an oversimplification to present this operation as an alternative to prolonged treatment with corticosteroids.

Dr. Marmor cannot be blamed for the paucity of his information about the outcome of individual operations in the long term, since so few data exist. He presents strikingly good figures of synovectomy of the knee, with all of 34 patients freed from pain and all but one from swelling. But only ten of these had been observed for more than one year after operation. The reader of this generally optimistic account should remind himself that technical success in the short term is not enough and that
many years of observation, if possible controlled, must pass before any operative procedure in rheumatoid arthritis can be accepted as of proven value. A few operations, such as osteotomy of the rheumatoid hip, are rightly condemned; time may yet usher others into disrepute.

The ingredients for success in this field are correct assessment of the natural history of the disease in the target joint and elsewhere, since deterioration at other sites may compromise an otherwise successful result, accurate appraisal of the patient's ability to cooperate in regaining function, selection of the correct operation, and good surgical technique. If Dr. Marmor's excellent descriptions of technique, albeit with less guidance to indications and choice of procedure, are set in this context of other factors, and if, furthermore, many operations are seen as measures still on trial, then his book will give useful service.

A. G. S. HILL


Although a few of the 39 short papers which make up this book were from the United States or from England, the large majority were from Canadian centres and they are an indication of the active and thriving state of rheumatism research in that country.

The symposium is arranged in seven parts: Morphological Studies and Experimental Arthritis; the Immunoglobulins; Lysozomes and Inflammation; Other Studies in Aetiology; Immune Mechanisms; Connective Tissue Biochemistry; Clinical Studies. The book is well produced and illustrated and the standard of some of the contributions is high. As with many reports of conferences, however, its value either as a corporate work or as a series of individual articles declines rapidly with the passage of time. Some of the more general papers, such as the account of the lysozomal concept by Dr. W. B. Chodirker and the survey of connective tissue biochemistry by Dr. C. S. Hanes, are of necessity very similar to numerous other accounts which have appeared during the past 2 or 3 years, while the data contained in many of the short original contributions have been published elsewhere. Dr. D. K. Ford's paper on searches for an infective agent in human arthritis now seems far too brief to satisfy the current interest in this topic, which has gained increasing attention in the relatively short time since the conference was held. One of the most important features of any symposium is the general discussion, which enlivens the individual contributions and welds them into a unified structure. The sponsors of this conference confess in their introduction that some of the most spirited discussion was sacrificed in the interest of brevity—in fact very little discussion appears at all, an unfortunate omission.

J. T. SCOTT


Professor de Sèze and his colleagues are to be congratulated on the appearance of the third of this series of annual reviews of topics in rheumatology. The more common problems of rheumatology were dealt with in previous issues, and this one, starting with the articular manifestations of scleroderma and ending with a review of arthroplasties for osteoarthritis of the hip, deals, in the main, with less frequent conditions and topics on the borderline of rheumatology. It is impossible to review in detail all the thirty papers, most of which are of high calibre, well-illustrated, and with up-to-date references. I found especially interesting the paper on amyloidosis in the course of rheumatoid arthritis, the review of that mysterious condition—tennis elbow, papers on the articular manifestations of the haemoglobinopathies, on hyperuricaemic substances, on the use of immuno-suppressive agents in rheumatology, and a paper on the accidents arising from spinal manipulation. In the surgical section Prof. Debeyre and his colleagues give cautious support to synovectomy in the treatment of polyarthritis, feeling that it has a special place in those cases where there is wrist or knee involvement which has failed to respond to medical measures. They feel (rightly in the reviewer's opinion) that there is not yet enough evidence to pronounce judgment on the use of synovectomy for the prevention of deformity. They are not very sanguine about the long-term results of arthroplasty by means of prosthetic replacements for osteo-arthritis of the hip. They feel that after an initial period of results which are often quite brilliant, there may be subsequent rapid deterioration. They do not, however, appear to have had a great deal of experience so far with the Mckee and Charnley total replacements of the hip. Nevertheless, they warn that "all attempts at articular reconstruction by an inert prosthesis are obstructed by 'an original sin', the difficulty of marrying the living bone to the inert material".