BOOK REVIEWS


This volume edited by Prof. August Rütt is a Festschrift for the 75th birthday of the veteran German orthopaedic surgeon, Prof. Matthias Hackenbroch, containing contributions from an imposing array of international authorities of whom the majority are German-speaking. The British contributors are McKee and Nissen, the French Merle d'Aubigné and the Judets, and the American Larson, Aufranc, Blount, and Mueller. It is claimed that a small proportion of osteoarthritic hips recover spontaneously and it is no doubt in honour of these that two chapters are devoted to medical and physical treatment. However, the vast majority do not fare so well and it is their problems which occupy most of the pages and test the ingenuity of the orthopaedic surgeons. As the story unfolds, so to speak, many formerly-held beliefs are gradually eroded. It would now appear that McMurray, in the days of the plaster spica, blundered in the right direction, but displacement osteotomy is now out of place and the alleged added pelvic support from the medially shifted lower fragment usually turns out to be a broken reed; decapitation of the femoral head is not synonymous with joint regeneration and mysterious allusions to improved blood supply are no longer mentioned in the same breath as osteotomy. Amidst the welter of eponymous osteotomies and arthroplasties, the “layman” can, at last, discern a gleam of light shining through the embattled interarticular surfaces of the hip joint. In the early stages of the disease, with a satisfactory acetabular cavity and a femoral head that is not too badly damaged, osteotomy is the operation of choice. X-ray films in abduction and adduction will determine the position in which congruence of the joint is obtained, i.e. concentricity of acetabular and femoral surfaces, and enable a decision to be taken on varus or valgus osteotomy. Meticulous preoperative planning will also make it possible to correct deformities due to flexion or rotation. Metal prostheses which replace the femoral head only, such as Moore’s, now seem to be out of favour. But since the osteoarthritis process frequently affects both acetabulum and femoral head, an operation which replaces both has much to commend it. The success of the total replacement prosthesis (McKee, Charnley) has been due to a better understanding of the principles of bio-mechanics, and this, in turn, has led to the use of a suitable cement backing for the prosthesis with a resulting spreading of load. Each contributor to the Festschrift has written on his own particular subject but the total effort may be summarized in two proverbs—“spread the load and spare the joint” and, referring to the common garden walking-stick, “spare the rod and spoil the joint”.

As is to be expected from this particular publishing house, the format, paper, illustrations, etc., are all of excellent quality. The volume has a table of contents, a list of the contributors and their appointments, and an international bibliography at the end of each chapter. Obviously, its appeal is to the orthopaedic surgeon rather than the physician, but it is good policy to be able to prepare your patient for what is coming.

DAVID FREISKEL.


The publishers oversell this slim volume by claiming a comprehensiveness that does not materialize. Leading authorities have contributed essays on four fields of research:

(i) Lawrence discusses his extensive pioneer work on the epidemiology and genetics of rheumatoid arthritis. The evidence is reviewed in the light of conventional methods of classification, the validity of most of which is now seriously in doubt. This makes it difficult to accept a number of the author’s