

## Reviews

### ANAESTHESIA FOR THYROID OPERATIONS

*Anaesthesia in Operations for Goitre.* By Stanley Rowbotham, M.D., D.A. (Pp. 104; illustrated. 12s. 6d.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications.

This is a monograph devoted to only one of the many problems the solution of which the anaesthetist must have at his finger-tips. Dr. Rowbotham, who has obviously had much experience of goitre anaesthesia, accomplishes his task admirably. The text is clear and full of practical clinical details not to be found anywhere else. Emphasis is rightly laid on the conception that the anaesthetist must be not only a good technician in the operating theatre but a good doctor at the bedside, understanding more than a little of the patient's disease. A brief but lucid account is given of the surgical anatomy, symptomatology, and treatment of the various types of goitre in so far as they are of interest to the anaesthetist; only then does the author discuss anaesthetic technique. Every conceivable difficulty likely to be met by the anaesthetist is discussed. Those to whom an endotracheal tube is anathema will find a doughty opponent in Dr. Rowbotham, who worked with Cecil Joll at the Royal Free Hospital for many years. The experienced anaesthetist should pause before disregarding the advice given by him—to use an endotracheal tube for thyroid operations. The reader is told how the thyroid patient should be dealt with before operation and how to tackle the occasional acute emergency which sometimes occurs, even with the best-regulated operation team, after the operation is over.

The book is lavishly and, what is more important, helpfully illustrated with photographs and drawings. It is in fact up to the standard which medical readers now expect from Blackwell Scientific Publications. Now that this book is available, surgeons are entitled to expect from their anaesthetists a high standard of anaesthesia for goitre operations.

### AMERICAN PAEDIATRICS

*Mitchell-Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics.* Edited by Waldo E. Nelson, M.D. Fourth edition, revised. (50s.) London: W. B. Saunders Company.

For its fourth edition the well-known "Griffiths and Mitchell" takes on a new editor and a new format. Prof. Waldo E. Nelson successfully manages a team of nearly fifty contributors, and the result is a double-column textbook of 1,350 pages, and 519 illustrations, many in colour. This is a first-class piece of work and a single-volume reference book of a high order. The editor is an old pupil of the late Dr. Graeme Mitchell, whose death at the early age of 52 was a tragic loss to paediatrics. Prof. Nelson starts off, therefore, with the advantage of knowing what the late editor had in mind for the development of the book. The reviewer cannot tell whether or not he has successfully carried out such plans, but the result is certainly a worthy product of the Temple University School of Medicine. The various monographs are well edited to secure a unity of presentation. References appear to be adequate and not too pedantically numerous. There is a good index. The quality of paper and of illustrations raises some envy in the reviewer, who has to use, daily, books of much inferior production, even if the subject-matter is beyond reproach. The new Mitchell-Nelson textbook is sure of as good a reception in this country as that of earlier editions. It gives an excellent account of American paediatric outlook and practice at the present time.

### THE PARIS MEDICAL FACULTY

*La Faculté de Médecine de Paris: Ses Origines, ses Richesses Artistiques.* By Pierre Valléry-Radot. (Pp. 78; illustrated. No price given.) Paris: Masson et Cie. 1944.

Dr. Valléry-Radot, who is a well-known French author, has compiled this account of the Paris Medical Faculty, including descriptions of its admirable monuments and mediaeval apparatus. He has avoided the danger of making his work too erudite and long, or too archaeological and brief.

For 150 years up till the Revolution the Faculties of Medicine (1369–1792) and Surgery (1691–1775) were entirely separate, with their own teachers and students. In the first two chapters the author traces the history of both these faculties up to the time of their fusion, and in a well-documented way shows the struggle they had, not only among themselves, but against the Govern-

ment and the people. Doctors had to contend against monk "fizicians" in monasteries and barbers who were unwilling to cede their rights to surgeons. In 1769, at the instigation of Louis XV, a new School of Anatomy was instituted. It was lavishly constructed, and served its purpose well for 25 years, when another college was opened—"L'École de Santé," memorable for being the end of the long-standing separation between physicians and surgeons and their interminable disputes. This school with its big lecture halls was devoted mainly to theoretical anatomy. Ten years later the College of Practical Anatomy was founded. In it students were taught "all the dissections and operations of surgery and were shown the advantages and inconveniences of operating." Despite all these improvements, which gave the Paris Medical Faculty two sets of buildings—theoretical on one side, and practical on the other—it was decided in 1936 to start the "Hôpital des Cliniques," embodying the latest features of modern medicine. Owing to war conditions this building is not yet finished. The penultimate chapter deals with the Dupuytren Museum and its immense collection of pathological anatomy specimens; it also houses the departments of anthropology, biology, and tropical medicine.

Paris is rich in medical artistic treasures and historic monuments. These have received much attention from the author, who includes many fine illustrations in his book. Dr. Valléry-Radot is keen on his subject and has elucidated many interesting facts from the bibliography, a list of which he gives at the end of the volume.

### A CARDIAC ABNORMALITY

*Pre-Excitation: A Cardiac Abnormality.* Patho-Physiological, Patho-Anatomical, and Clinical Studies of an Excitatory Spread Phenomenon bearing upon the Problem of the WPW (Wolff, Parkinson, and White) Electrocardiogram and Paroxysmal Tachycardia. By Richard F. Öhnell. (Pp. 167; illustrated. 15s.) London: Henry Kimpton.

Dr. Öhnell's monograph describes studies of the spread of the excitation wave in the heart bearing upon the problem of the Wolff-Parkinson-White electrocardiogram. This is a very technical matter which is at present familiar only to cardiologists. Nevertheless, since the curves were first described by the above-mentioned writers in 1930 some 120 papers on the subject have appeared.

The syndrome is marked by the following characteristics. The conduction time from auricle to ventricle (P-R interval) is abnormally short. The ventricular complex which follows is abnormally prolonged and of unusual form. It resembles that of bundle branch block in some respects. These abnormal curves are not always present in any one patient, and various causes can make them disappear or reappear. The most satisfactory explanation for the curves is that there is a second conducting path to the ventricles, in addition to the bundle of His. The authors have adduced some very convincing evidence that in one case of theirs they found at necropsy a small bundle running from the left auricle to the left ventricle. This might transmit the impulse as well as the bundle of His, so that the left ventricle recorded two impulses, one a little before the other, with the result that the actual excitation time of the ventricle appeared to be prolonged. A further association of this conduction phenomenon is the frequent occurrence of paroxysmal tachycardia. It seems possible that the impulse causing these attacks circulates through the conducting channel. Normal curves may replace the abnormal on changes in posture, after thyroidectomy, and after quinidine and atropine. The abnormality has no pathological importance and is found in normal, healthy hearts.

The monograph is full but is by no means easy reading, for its disjointed style, not always clear in expression, makes assimilation difficult. The chief importance of the syndrome would so far appear to be the recognition of it as harmless, and its differentiation from the prolongations of conduction which are of pathological significance.

### Notes on Books

In the abstracts which appear month by month in the *Tropical Diseases Bulletin* and the *Bulletin of Hygiene* (and in the *Bulletin of War Medicine* during the war) the Bureau of Hygiene and Tropical Diseases records the current literature on subjects coming within its fields of interest. From time to time the Bureau has been asked for information on some particular branch of medical work to be collected in the form of a monograph for the greater convenience