

newest volume of the *Transactions of the American Goiter Association* recalls so many pleasant memories that an aura invisible to the ordinary reader surrounds even such matters as the inaccuracies involved in the salting-out technique in estimating hydrolysis, or the limitations imposed by the rate of hydration of  $\text{CO}_2$  to yield  $\text{H}^+$  and  $\text{HCO}_3^-$  on the trans-cellular ionic exchanges. But even those less fortunate readers whose memory cannot recall the benign expressions of the pundits, viewed through the special light-filtration effects of an "old-fashioned" or a mint julep, must realize that in this volume are gathered a fairly high proportion of the more significant advances in the study of the thyroid gland which have occurred in the last year in the U.S.A., Canada, and Britain.

Though much of the volume will be found a little too strong for clinicians, a new arrangement reduces many even of the most abstruse papers to sea-level. The biochemical papers have been transcribed into practical terms by such well-known amphibians as Rulon Rawson, and thus the ordinary doctor is able to appreciate without too much strain the ways in which the scientists are contributing to the everyday business of the diagnosis and treatment of thyroid disorders.

RAYMOND GREENE.

### THE STORY OF MEDICINE

*The Story of Medicine.* By Kenneth Walker, M.A., M.B., F.R.C.S. (Pp. 343; illustrated. 21s.) London: Hutchinson and Co. 1954.

Mr. Kenneth Walker is well known for his writings on certain branches of medicine, and in this book he now attempts the difficult task of writing the story of medicine in a style suitable for the layman. The scope of the book extends from prehistoric medicine to the organization of the blood-transfusion service during and after the war and the discovery of penicillin. The author's style is pleasant and easy to follow, and he does not overcrowd his canvas. Up to about the beginning of the nineteenth century the story is told chronologically, but the later history is treated on a subject basis. As might be expected, the author thus finds it necessary to introduce in these later chapters accounts of the earlier history of the subjects dealt with.

Mr. Walker states the five main sources which he used in writing this book, and he quotes from them extensively. Those who know these works will appreciate that he has sometimes been unfortunate in the choice of his quotations, so that the author's meaning is distorted and the kernel of the matter is omitted. Though Mr. Walker warns the reader that there are gaps in his "story," it is rather surprising to find that his emphasis is frequently different from what one might expect. Thus, while Vesalius gets two pages, Paré gets eleven. Eight pages are devoted to Paracelsus and six to Mesmer, while John Hunter is dealt with in three. It is the rebel in medicine who seems to interest Mr. Walker most, and it is perhaps significant that this book ends with a chapter on quacks and beauty treatment.

Mr. Walker's book will be read with profit by the many laymen who show an intelligent interest in the history of medicine. It is unfortunately marred by many errors of omission and commission and by misprints. In his preface he states that he started from scratch on the history of medicine, and in six months learnt it and wrote this book. The result is interesting as the product of an acute and vigorous mind which has come fresh to the subject.

E. A. UNDERWOOD.

### DIABETIC VASCULAR DISEASE

*Angiopathia Diabetica: Konservative Behandlung des Zuckerbrandes.* By Professor Dr. M. Bürger. (Pp. 190+ viii; illustrated. D.M. 69.) Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag. 1954.

This monograph on diabetic vascular disease has as its subtitle "The Conservative Management of Diabetic Gangrene." It is pointed out that nowadays the majority of diabetics die of arterial disease, and not in coma. The

author claims that there exists a specific disease of the vessels which is peculiar to diabetes mellitus. The capillaries are the important structures; they have a function in each organ that is peculiar to that organ, and that explains why in different structures capillary damage manifests itself in different ways. The retinal and glomerular lesions are referred to here. A biochemical examination of the chemical content of the vessels of normal, aged, and diabetic subjects showed that in nearly all respects the diabetics were most abnormal. Special attention is paid to the capillary resistance and other physical tests. For instance, among diabetics with albuminuria there was a much higher proportion with low capillary resistance than among those without.

These are elaborate and interesting studies. Many references are made to the literature, but it would have been helpful if more summaries and conclusions had been provided. There is a long section on the economy of physical work in diabetics. The author concludes that the metabolism of diabetics depends on uneconomical working of muscles. All this thoughtful work provides much interesting reading.

The final section deals with the bad end-results—gangrene—some 469 cases forming the basis of the author's observations. The results achieved by close collaboration with the surgeons and the help of insulin and antibiotics and sulphonamides are remarkably good, far above half the cases of gangrene being saved from amputation.

The text is well illustrated with tables, diagrams, and photographs; the print and paper are excellent.

TERENCE EAST.

### CONTROL OF DIABETES

*The Diabetic Life: Its Control by Diet and Insulin.* By R. D. Lawrence, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P. 15th edition. (Pp. 228+xii. 12s. 6d.) London: J. and A. Churchill, Ltd. 1955.

Dr. Lawrence's bold experiment of writing one book for both the diabetic and his doctor has undoubtedly been a success: in 30 years 15 editions have been published. The latest contains much new material, including a very lucid description of the new insulin zinc suspensions. In this connexion it may be regretted that the Danish names for these insulins are used in preference to the approved British names.

This book is primarily intended for the general practitioner, to enable him to deal with his diabetic patients and to have some idea of what is likely to happen to them when they have to go to hospital. It does this admirably, although it is surprising to find no reference to the high incidence of coronary thrombosis in diabetics. The specialist or doctor working in hospital will also find the book helpful. The symptoms, diagnosis, complications, and treatment of diabetes are fully described. Advice on how to manage a pregnant woman or surgical patient with the condition is comprehensive and practical. The account given of the treatment of severe diabetic ketosis will not be approved by all physicians. Dr. Lawrence continues to advocate comparatively small doses of insulin in these cases, despite the figures published from Joslin's clinic in Boston. He mentions the use of potassium, but the strength of intravenous solution recommended contains a misprint which makes it difficult to interpret and the rate of administration suggested is dangerously rapid.

Two impressions remain in the mind after reading this book. The first is the debt owed to the author by all diabetics. His simplified diets, the British Diabetic Association, and his common-sense handling of everyday problems have helped diabetics in all walks of life. The second is of Dr. Lawrence's vast experience of the clinical problems of diabetes. Reference is made, for example, to 50 cases of diabetes with myxoedema and to 12 with cancer of the pancreas presenting first with diabetes. It makes one hope that one day he will find time to write a comprehensive account of the clinical aspects of this condition.

J. D. N. NABARRO.