

## Book Reviews

### *The Very Stuff of Anaesthesia*

**Clinical Anaesthesia Conferences.** Edited by Lester C. Mark, M.D. (Pp. 326 + xii. £5 5s.) London: J. & A. Churchill. 1967.

In spite of the scientific advances in anaesthesia, nothing can take the place of continuous careful observation of the patient. What is seen, however, must be interpreted so skilfully that complications can be forestalled and accidents prevented. There is a real danger just now that young anaesthetists may concentrate their attention on the more "scientific" aspects of anaesthesia to the exclusion of the more mundane but equally important ones, which draw on an accumulated store of clinical experience and knowledge. Anaesthesia still causes preventable deaths and serious complications, the majority of which are usually due to crude and preventable things of which respiratory obstruction, drug overdose, inhalation of vomit, and circulatory failure are but a few examples.

Descriptions of these and many, many, more are to be found in the case reports gathered together in this book. These reports are based on the clinical anaesthesia con-

ferences which are published regularly in the *New York State Journal of Medicine* and which have been a feature of that journal for some ten years. The cases make fascinating reading, for not only is the discursive style used—admirably suited to the subject material—but each case report is followed by a terse and apt commentary, frequently flavoured with the unique tang of American colloquialism to drive home a point. The complications, by no means always fatal, which are described, fall under the headings of respiration, cardiovascular system, blood transfusion, regional anaesthesia, muscle relaxants, obstetrics, urethral surgery, errors in technique, and others.

This book is the very stuff of anaesthesia, and those in training will get more value out of it than many a systematic textbook. An anaesthetist is more likely to be judged incompetent in his specialist examination or in his hospital practice for failure to recognize, prevent, or treat the complications of

anaesthesia exposed here, than for his knowledge at some more abstruse level, important though that may be. The experienced anaesthetist is bound to read this book with delight, for he will find set out the excitements and triumphs as well as the disappointments which make clinical anaesthesia such a worthwhile occupation. Other physicians too will read this book with interest if not with profit. It is not only good armchair reading, but it demonstrates clearly the value, in terms of life and limb to a patient undergoing surgery, of having a competent and well-trained anaesthetist. The case reports show that anaesthesia is not simply a matter of the repetitive performance of a few technical procedures, but of the involvement of every aspect of the training that goes into a good doctor.

This is a good medical book in its own right, for it recounts clinical experience in a skilful manner. If its lessons are taken, it will benefit those who read it and their patients, and it will perhaps act as a stimulus to groups of anaesthetists in this country to do more actively what the New York anaesthetists have already been doing for so long.

W. W. MUSHIN.

### *Fair Play for Pharmaceuticals*

**Medicine at Risk.** The High Price of Cheap Drugs. By F. H. Happold. (Pp. 212. 18s. Paper 12s. 6d.) London: Queen Anne Press. 1967.

History is most fascinating when presented by prejudiced rather than by impartial historians, provided one has time to consult the works of their rival protagonists. The same applies to most controversial questions; one gets a better—or certainly a more stimulating—impression by reading the views of ardent controversialists rather than by consulting the anaemic representations of impartial students.

The modern pharmaceutical industry seems to stimulate not only commissions of inquiry but also passionate controversy. For years critical onslaughts on it have been published which, though the industry in certain respects is susceptible to justifiable criticism, have often been intemperate, sensational, and hysterical. We have also had references from noble ladies in the House of Lords to "the vultures of the pharmaceutical industry making their unholy profits at the expense of the community," and even from more eminent politicians in the House of Commons that the industry has "grown fat at the expense of the public purse."

More recently the industry has found a number of apologists, of whom Mr. Happold is one. It must be confessed that their apologies are much less intemperate than the fulminations of their opponents. The author has relied on four main lines of argument, and has produced some cogent evidence to

support them: firstly, that industry has been mainly responsible for the great therapeutic progress of the last 50 years; secondly, that the drug bill forms a relatively modest and constant proportion of the cost of the National Health Service; thirdly, that financial decisions can be taken rapidly by industry without those in charge having to fear the odium of having wasted public money should the project fail; and, lastly, that the important drugs which the manufacturers produce constitute a saving to the national economy in diminishing mortality and morbidity besides contributing very significantly to the export drive.

The book is well written and traces in an interesting fashion the history of the therapeutic revolution of the last 30 years, and explains—possibly from a somewhat biased point of view—the complexities of prices, profits, and patents. This short and inexpensive volume can be confidently recommended to the many who are interested in the subject.

DERRICK DUNLOP.

### *Immunity Phenomena*

**Delayed Hypersensitivity.** By J. L. Turk. (Pp. 252 + ix. 80s.) Amsterdam: North-Holland. 1967.

This valuable monograph appears at a time when cell-mediated immune reactions are beginning to be understood, and it is greatly to the credit of Dr. Turk that he has succeeded in writing a book which is extremely readable and at the same time provides a serious critical analysis of present knowledge on this difficult topic.

The tuberculin or Mantoux reaction reflects complicated and long-lasting immunity phenomena, yet is independent of circulating antibodies in the accepted sense. Other examples of the dermal expression of this type of immune reaction are the virus exanthems and chemical or toxic contact sensitivity dermatitis. Of more crucial importance to human pathology is the central role played by delayed hypersensitivity phenomena in the rejection of grafted organs. A fuller understanding of this phenomenon in transplantation immunity is essential to the future development of one of the most exciting new branches of surgery, and immunological studies have already greatly contributed to the success of kidney transplantation. Delayed hypersensitivity phenomena may also be of importance in the understanding of many diseases, such as the connective tissue disorders, in which there appears to be an underlying abnormality in immunological responsiveness.

In the organ-specific type of autoimmune disorders many of the pathological changes cannot be explained by the effects of circulating antibodies alone, and the role of cell-mediated reactions is being intensively studied at the present time. Another aspect in which delayed hypersensitivity might be implicated is the defence of the organism against cancer. In all these fields research is advancing rapidly, although it is still mostly concentrated on the fundamental aspects which are being studied in experimental animals. Dr. Turk has himself contributed important original papers on the cytological events in delayed hypersensitivity skin reactions and other experimental aspects of the subject, so