A BISHOP'S SENSE AND NONSENSE

Five years ago Eldridge Campbell and James Colton translated the first two books of The Surgery of Theodoric, Bishop of Cervia, who flourished about A.D. 1267. That volume contained the remarkable description of aseptic wound-treatment, a vision of the truth which was too far ahead of the time to become generally adopted. The same authors have now translated Theodoric's work, though, unfortunately, Dr. Campbell did not live to see the publication of this second volume, which deals with fistulae, abscesses, cancer, tumours, herniae, and other general surgical conditions.

The surgery of 700 years ago was a curious mixture of practical common sense and theoretical nonsense. The Bishop was wiser than his writings, for, after a long description in which drugs and mumbo-jumbo were mingled, he adds, "perchance their faith help them." For the modern doctor the old humoral pathology complicates matters. One can understand that "a boil is a kind of hot abscess" and can marvel that "erysipelas is an imposthume from fiery bile," but how difficult it is to follow that "the material causes of an imposthume are six: the four humors and superfluities of fluid and wind."

Theodoric gives excellent descriptions of fistula in general, and fistula-in-ano in particular, and special accounts are given of operations for stone in the bladder and for umbilical and inguinal hernia. He preferred the cautery to the knife in operations for hernia, and recommends, in view of the fact that "death can follow very easily," that the doctor should not undertake this cure with any desire of financial return "except when he has been asked by the patient, and then in his presence and the presence of his friends (or at least in the presence of his friends) he has made clear the eminent danger."

There is much to enjoy, much to puzzle over, and a good deal to be thankful for, in the reading of this book.

ZACHARY COPE.

Pneumoconiosis Abstracts, Volume III, contains abstracts reproduced from the Bulletin of Hygiene for the years 1951 to 1955. It continues the sequence established by the previous volumes—covering the period from 1926 to 1950—and the set therefore provides in tablet form the important papers published in the field of pneumoconiosis over a period of 30 years. Also included are abstracts of articles on dust. (Pitman Medical Publishing Co., Ltd.; 376+ viii pp.; index of authors or sources, and of subjects; 65s.)

The Handbook of Diet Therapy, written and compiled by Dorothy Turner for the American Dietetic Association, is now in its third edition. It includes new chapters on diet during pregnancy, adolescence, and old age; energy expenditure; fatty acid modifications; and phenylalanine restrictions; while the chapters on the sodium-restricted diet, the low- and high-calorie diets, and the soft and low-fibre diets have been completely revised. There is a comprehensive chapter on "Interviewing the Patient" by Margaret Read, which recognizes that the dietitian must be able to translate her knowledge of the basic principles of nutrition into the practical terms of each patient's everyday life. (Cambridge University Press, 1959; 222+ xv pp.; index; price £1 17s. 6d.)

BOOKS RECEIVED


COMING EVENTS

College of General Practitioners.—Lecture and demonstration: Professor Sheila Sherlock, "The Differential Diagnosis of Juvenile Cystic Fibrosis," October 8, 2.15 p.m., Royal Free Hospital, Grays Inn Road, London W.C.I.

Institute of Urology.—Weekend course, "Urology for Higher Examinations," October 14—16. Details on advertisement p. 64.

British Association of Sport and Medicine.—Lecture programme, October 15, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Arthur Stanley Institute, Peto Place, Marylebone Road, London N.W.I. Informal dinner: Horse Shoe Hotel, Tottenham Court Road, London W.I. Tickets from Dr. D. J. Cussen, St. Helen's Court, Great St. Helen's, London E.C.3.

Association of Clinical Biochemists (Southern Region).—Meeting, Royal Victoria Hospital, Daly's Road, Rochford, Essex, October 22, 2 p.m. Members wishing to have tea should apply to Dr. P. W. Perryman, at the hospital, by October 17.


Queen's Institute of District Nursing.—Annual meeting October 20, 2.30 p.m., Assembly Hall, Church House, Dean's Yard, Westminster, London S.W.1. Address: Sir Kenneth Cowan.

London Division, Ileostomy Association of Great Britain.—Meeting, Great Hall, B.M.A. House, October 22: 2.30 p.m., exhibition of ileostomy appliances; 3 p.m., Dr. R. W. Barker (Princess Mary's Hospital, Margate), "Rehabilitation."

Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London.—Annual Master's Day Service, Church of St. Mary, Aldermary, October 23, 11.15 a.m.

SOCIETIES AND LECTURES

A fee is charged or a ticket is required for attending lectures marked ●. Application should be made first to the institution concerned.

Monday, October 10

Postgraduate Medical School.—4 p.m., Professor A. C. Dornborn: Asthma in Hospital.

Tuesday, October 11

BIRMINGHAM MEDICAL INSTITUTE: SECTION OF PSYCHIATRY.—8 p.m., Dr. P. F. J. Fish: Examinations and Psychiatric Aspects of Postnatal Morbidity.

INSTITUTE OF DERMATOLOGY.—5.30 p.m., Dr. A. Magnus: Effects of Ultraviolet Light on the Healing Process.

LEEDS NEUROLOGICAL SCIENCES COLLOQUIUM.—October 16, at Littlewood Hall, General Infirmary at Leeds, 5.15 p.m., Dr. R. W. Gilliatt: New Studies of Peripheral Nerve Conduction.

MANCHESTER MEDICAL SOCIETY: SECTION OF SURGERY.—At Large Anatomy Theatre, Medical School, Manchester University, 7.30 for 8 p.m., Presidential Address by Mr. H. T. Simmons: On Ulcerative Colitis.

OLDER TOWNS CIRCLE OF LONDON.—At British Museum, 8.15 p.m., "The Rockefeller Foundation and Practice," Dr. Sir Frank Francis, Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, Dr. J. H. Morley, Dr. W. G. C. Gower, Dr. A. C. Dornborn, Dr. W. J. Frencheff, Dr. R. E. H. Moore, Dr. G. E. Reader, Dr. J. A. Schor, Mr. M. D. S. Tandy, Dr. R. A. M. Watson, Dr. D. J. Watson, Dr. A. S. W. Williams.

ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL COLLEGE.—5 p.m., Professor Charles Wells: Urethral Injuries and the Treatment of Structure.