

Book Reviews

Geschichte der Orthopädie. PROF. BRUNO VALENTIN. Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag, 1961; pp. xiv+288. DM 39.60.

It is difficult to understand how it is that no general history of orthopaedic surgery has appeared before the present volume. We have Bick's *Sourcebook*, and some monographs on particular individuals and particular aspects of the subject, but Professor Valentin's book is the first to cover the whole field. Let it be said at once that the gap has now been filled so satisfactorily as to make the way very difficult for any competing medical historian. The book falls naturally into two parts. In the first, after some brief notes on the orthopaedics of the ancient world, Professor Valentin takes a few of the more important orthopaedic problems, such as diseases of the spine and club foot, and discusses in detail the approach to aetiology and treatment through the centuries. To read these pages is to be struck by the ages of thought and effort that have preceded our present understanding, and to be impressed by the lack of novelty of many of our current procedures. The illustrations are numerous and of excellent quality and vividly illuminate the past; witness the dramatic scene of Calot actually performing his *redressement brusque* for Pott's disease in 1897. A short subsection dealing with particular operations, such as osteotomy and osteoclasis, is perhaps not so well done.

The second part of the book deals with individual orthopaedic surgeons and institutions in a number of countries—England, France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, Scandinavia, Italy and America. Of these the first three are, quite properly, given pride of place; and, if the impression made on this reviewer by the accuracy of the abundant material relating to our own country is any criterion, this section is an extremely valuable one. One may differ on a point of emphasis here and there—as on the relative importance accorded to Little and Thomas—but that is all; and much of the material is novel or little known.

The book is beautifully produced, as we expect from the publishers, and should become the standard work for many years. Every orthopaedic surgeon should possess it, even if his command of German is mediocre. The making of an English translation would be a great service to orthopaedic surgeons in this country and the United States.

DAVID LE VAY

The Detection of Secret Homicide: A Study of the Medico-legal System of Investigation of Sudden and Unexplained Deaths. J. D. J. HAVARD. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960; pp. xv+253. £1 15s.

In his introduction the author states this book is concerned simply with the problem of ensuring that deaths resulting from homicide are not disposed of as cases of natural death.

To achieve this object, he starts by tracing the history of the development of the English medico-legal system of investigation of sudden death from the twelfth century to the present day. The central chapters describe the present system, and the author draws attention to defects, which, in his opinion, exist in current regulations. The last part of the book compares the English system with those of other countries and makes suggestions for its reform.

The chapters which deal with the history of the medico-legal system constitute a third of the book. These chapters show evidence of much research and the references and bibliography are extensive, though the use of large footnotes tends to cause confusion. The emphasis throughout is on the legal aspects of the system, and the emergence of the medical witness in courts of law is scarcely mentioned. In places the account loses its chronological sequence and becomes confusing, but on the whole this book deals with the historical aspects of its subject in an interesting and informative manner.

D. J. GEE