

BOOK REVIEW

Man Against Pain. By HOWARD RILEY RAPER. Price, \$3.50. Pp. 337, with 25 illustrations. New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1945.

Quoted often are the words of the great French surgeon, Valpeau: "Knife and pain, in operative surgery, are two words, which never suggest themselves the one without the other to the mind of the patient, and it is necessary to admit the connection." Less than a decade followed this hopeless prognostication before the melancholy connection was completely severed in America. The history of humanity knows no more blessed event. It is America's epoch of glory.

Unfortunately, the story cannot be told without shame for it includes greed, scandal, suicide and tragedy. But such is the story of anesthesia, a story well told in "Man Against Pain."

This compelling epic of medicine has been told before. It may be read in more formal, well documented history books. It is to be found in part in less serious and less thorough monographs but no where can it be read with more real enjoyment than will be had with author Raper.

"Man Against Pain" was not written for an exclusive medical audience. It does not, however, color the events to enhance popularization. Historical accuracy prevails but it is cleverly written with dramatic effect. There is much of humor and entertainment in this story that must relate many sordid details.

This narrative is told in four parts: Failure, Success, Conflict and Progress. The first is labeled *background* which reviews the earliest known and sug-

gested efforts to conquer pain. The narcotics, hypnotism and even "the club" are reviewed. Failure is the keyword in the short descriptions of early surgery.

Success becomes *discovery* and the reader is in the nineteenth century with "those who came close" and "the discovery." The author wanted to be—on his own admission—impartial. In the foreword, he doubts his success in this noble undertaking. The reader will decide.

Conflict is the *controversy*, the Long, Wells, Morton, Jackson turmoil which highlights the book. It is told fairly and informatively but dramatically.

In progress, *modern anesthesia* is the theme. New drugs, local and regional anesthesia, new appliances and the new anesthesiologist are portrayed. It is the future of optimism.

Dr. Raper has departed from the usual custom with illustration. All that appear in *Man Against Pain* are found before the Table of Contents is reached. These are few but well chosen and well produced. There is a liberal, general bibliography but of most interest is the critical bibliography of more than forty pages wherein the author "takes apart" some twenty-two publications dealing with his subject, sometimes kindly, other times indignantly. This section adds much for the reader familiar with the subject.

In all, this volume is a most welcome addition to the popular books about medicine. It is not another "doctor book." It tells a story that will captivate the medical, dental and layman reader. It is an American story told in the American way.

E. A. ROVENSTINE, M.D.