The Anesthesiologist's Bookshelf

Edited by HUBERTA M. LIVINGSTONE, M.D.

The Discovery of Anaesthesia: The Strange Story of the Ether Controversy. By L. J. Ludovici. Cloth. $5.00. Pp. 230. Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1961.

This book, originally published in Great Britain under the title "Cone of Oblivion," is an exceedingly detailed exposé of William T. G. Morton's life, of events leading up to the public demonstration of ether anesthesia, and of the violent controversy that followed. Morton is cast as a hero who remains unrewarded during his lifetime. The Boston chemist, C. T. Jackson, is clearly the villain, cast as a psycopath, maligning all who stood in his way. Horace Wells, the Hartford dentist, intermittently passes through the scene, connected yet disconnected from the plot, and finally "used" by Jackson in degrading Morton. Crawford Long, the Georgia physician, is scarcely considered except as a vehicle for Jackson's venom.

While the book is obviously biased, it nevertheless contains a wealth of fact that has probably escaped most anesthetists. To one schooled in the modern development of new anesthetics, the preliminary experiments by Morton leave one aghast. In view of what we know of ether today, one is even more amazed that the original demonstration went so well. How many are aware of Jackson's feud with Samuel F. B. Morse claiming that the idea of the telegraph was his; or that Jackson did his best to discredit William Beaumont and his work with Alexis St. Martin, claiming he was the more important contributor to our knowledge of gastric physiology? Sad indeed it is to read of Morton's death in Central Park of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of forty-eight, to recall that Wells committed suicide in a paroxysm of insanity, and that Jackson was found a screaming maniac at Morton's grave, to be committed to an insane asylum where he died at the age of seventy-five.

At times the reading becomes tedious and the reader tires of the author exonerating all of Morton's acts. Nonetheless, there is much valuable and little realized information. There is no reason to doubt that the facts as stated are true. The bibliography is excellent and the book is well indexed. All anesthesiologists interested in the origins of their specialty should possess a copy.

James E. Eckenhoff, M.D.

The Man Who Conquered Pain. By Grace Steele Woodward. Cloth. $3.50. Pp. 175. Beacon Press, Boston, 1962.

This is the second biography of William Thomas Green Morton to appear within two years. Perhaps this book represents a more personalized account of Morton's life because the author has had the advantage of incorporating information from 500 unpublished Morton letters. This probably explains why the biography begins with the opening of a dental office in Boston by Morton together with Horace Wells, with little reference to earlier years. Morton was very concerned about the pain suffered by his patients during dental extractions in preparation for application of his newly devised suction dental plates. His efforts to investigate the effects of ether prior to his public demonstration of anesthesia are vividly portrayed. Many may be surprised to learn that Morton previously anesthetized with ether nearly one hundred dental patients before the engagement with John Collins Warren and his patient, Gilbert Abbott. The story of the bitter controversy with Jackson is clearly retold. The strenuous and repeated efforts of Morton to get Congressional approbation are especially well covered. Excerpts from letters written at this time emphasize the strain and physical exhaustion suffered by Morton as he

attempted to vindicate himself. The frustrations he experienced from minuscule technicalities and the disinterestedness of some government leaders become indelibly impressed on the reader.

The Man Who Conquered Pain is a pleasant book to read. It contains a wealth of fact and a good bibliography. One does not tire of reading this volume which can be completed in one evening. The book is highly recommended for anesthesiologists and laymen alike.

JAMES E. ECKENHOFF, M.D.

Clinical Anesthesia. Vol. I. Halogenated Anesthetics. JOSEPH F. ARTUSIO, Jr., M.D., Editor-in-Chief, Professor of Anesthesiology in Surgery, Cornell University Medical Center, New York; PETER H. BYLES, M.B., Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology, and ALLEN B. DOBKIN, M.D., Professor and Chairman, Department of Anesthesiology, State University of New York, Upstate Medical Center; WILLIAM H. L. DORNETTE, M.D., Professor of Anesthesiology, University of Tennessee College of Medicine; B. E. MARBURY, M.D., Clinical Associate Professor of Anesthesiology in Surgery, Cornell University Medical Center; LUCIEN E. MORRIS, M.D., Clinical Professor of Anesthesiology, University of Washington, Director, Anesthesia Research Laboratories, Providence Hospital; ROBERT I. SCHRIER, M.D., Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology in Surgery, Cornell University Medical Center; C. R. STEPHEN, M.D., Professor of Anesthesiology, Duke University Medical Center, and ALAN VAN POZNAK, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology in Surgery, Cornell University Medical Center. Cloth. $7.50. Pp. 144 with illustrations. F. A. Davis Company, Philadelphia, 1962.

This short, easy-to-read reference book includes contributions by nine authors, each experienced in the use of a particular anesthetic agent. An introductory chapter by the Editor-in-Chief presents characteristics of various halogenated compounds as related to their structural formulas. Methods of investigating and introducing new compounds into clinical anesthesia are emphasized. The newer halogenated anesthetics, teflurane and halopropane, are mentioned briefly, and it is suggested that they may have clinical promise.

History, pharmacology, and clinical application of the anesthetics are presented. Those reviewed are chloroform, trichlorethylene, fluroxene, halothane, methoxyflurane, tribromoethanol, and ethyl chloride. Each chapter concludes with a summary of the present practical clinical use of the agent. The large number of graphs and charts are based primarily on basic research. Stressed throughout is the fact that no single agent possesses all the desired characteristics, and that anesthesiologists should not limit themselves to any one agent.

Any anesthesiologist contemplating the use of chloroform would be well advised to study Chapter 2 which contains thorough theoretical and practical information. It seems doubtful, however, that chloroform can be resurrected to a prominent place in modern anesthesiology. The merits and the demerits of trichlorethylene are well presented in Chapter 3. This drug has been replaced largely by halothane. In Chapter 4, attention is drawn to the wide margin of safety offered by fluorexene. The most valuable contribution to this monograph is the chapter on halothane, which contains a thought-provoking caution regarding possible liver damage accompanying the use of this agent.

As a reference work on the use of halogenated anesthetics in the practice of anesthesia, this book serves a worthwhile purpose.

M. DIGBY LEIGH, M.D.

Progress in Surgery. *Progrès en Chirurgie. Fortschritte der Chirurgie.* Volume 2. EDITED by M. ALLGÖWER, M.D., Ph.D., Chief of the Surgical Department of the Räthischen Kantonsspitals, Chur, Switzerland. Contributors: R. E. BILLINGHAM, M.D., The Wistar Institute, Philadelphia, Pa.; W. BRENDEL, M.D., The Physiological Institute of the Justus Liebig University, Giessen, Germany; A. MONSAINGEON, M.D., Chief Surgeon of the Hospital Paul Brousse, Villejuif, France; P. S. RUSSELL, M.D., Assistant Professor of Surgery, Columbia University, New York, N. Y.; R. THAUER, M.D., Professor and Director of the William G. Kerckhoff Heart Research Institute of the Max