

## The Anesthesiologist's Bookshelf

Edited by MEREL H. HARMEL

**Thoughts on Modern Anaesthesia.** By C. LANGTON HEWER. London, J. A. Churchill, 1970. Pp. 62. \$5.50.

In this thin and reasonably priced paperback, C. Langton Hewer, late Editor of *Anaesthesia*, gives us his critical appraisal of some aspects of present-day practice. All of the ingrained beliefs of past generations of anesthetists are aired here. Thus, it is observed that anesthesia has become too complex; polypharmacy prevails. As a distinguished visitor to the author's clinic once remarked, it seemed to him that the operation was simply an unimportant incident in an incredibly complicated anesthetic technique which started hours before surgery and continued for days afterwards. Hewer himself offers the view that while cardiac resuscitation has become more effective arrest is nonetheless more frequent. He asks, in connection with reports concerning awareness during anesthesia, shouldn't the reaction of patients be, "If you cannot even keep us unconscious, anesthesia must be in a pretty bad way."

In the same vein, we hear the old refrain that ether is still the safest agent of all. Chloroform is looked upon with more than mere nostalgia. Fluoroxene is dismissed in a few words as having no compensating advantages over other agents. In Britain, spinal analgesia and now epidural anesthesia are still regarded with suspicion; the notorious lawsuit of Wooley vs. Roe (1953) is resurrected to explain this unshakable attitude. In commenting on monitoring during anesthesia the attitude is taken that while the electrocardiograph is a fascinating instrument it can be of only doubtful value to the singlehanded anesthetist.

Admittedly, the chapters comprise a series of disjointed observations which hardly aspire to the title of essays. But the reader will derive considerable pleasure in perusing them—a short flight of reading when the opportune time comes. This is a semi historical and anecdotal treatise, classically British in style, attesting to the author's long experience and wisdom as a clinician.

LEROY D. VANDAM, M.D.  
Peter Bent Brigham Hospital  
Boston, Massachusetts 02115

**Elements of Pediatric Anesthesia.** Second Edition. By C. R. STEPHEN, E. W. AHLGREN AND E. J. BENNETT. Springfield, Illinois, Charles C Thomas, 1970. Pp. 202. \$8.00.

The dust jacket of Stephen, Ahlgren and Bennett's "Elements of Pediatric Anesthesia" states

that "the monograph is designed to present in a practical manner problems encountered by a practitioner when confronted by patients who are not small adults."

This statement seems to suggest that a practitioner, when confronted by any difficult problem in pediatric anesthesia, has only to pick up this small handbook; read a superficial paragraph or two about the difficulty; and emerge prepared to apply skillfully the accumulated wisdom or pediatric anesthesia to his little patient.

"Elements of Pediatric Anesthesia" has some assets. The organization of its chapters is logical and effective. The references for each chapter are excellent and well selected. But the liabilities of the work outweigh its assets. The style is awkward and therefore difficult to read. The discussions are so superficial as to appear trivial. The book emerges as a badly written residents' manual with a well selected reading list.

The anesthesia public has a great need for much more than this book has to offer. No text on pediatric anesthesia exists that offers an authoritative presentation of the underlying areas of pediatric anatomy, pharmacology and physiology, followed by a careful discussion of the issues imposed by clinical pediatric anesthesia. The presentation should include a thorough explanation of the best current methods of managing the patient.

What is available for the anesthesiologist who should have an authoritative, literate reference that deals in depth and maturity with the special problems of pediatric anesthesia? There are only two sources, among all that has been written, that I recommend to colleagues and residents as worthwhile discussions of pediatric anesthesia: Robert Smith's "Anesthesia for Infants and Children," and Rackow and Salanitre's review, "Modern Concepts in Pediatric Anesthesiology" (*ANESTHESIOLOGY* 30: 208-234, 1969). I have previously, and at great length, discussed Smith's book. Rackow and Salanitre present a balanced, scholarly and well-written discussion of the most important issues and concepts in pediatric anesthesia; this is accomplished in 25 pages, citing 240 excellently selected references.

A comparison of the sections on temperature regulation in the new book by Stephen *et al.* and the article by Rackow and Salanitre is revealing. Both use approximately 2,000 words. The article presents a full and complete discussion. Historical perspective is included, with a succinct discussion of the pertinent physiology, including the phenomenon of cold stress. The effects of events surrounding anesthesia and operation are evalu-