THE EVOLUTION OF ANAESTHESIA

B.C.
c. 1301–1234. Rameses II (the Great), XIXth Dynasty. The empire maintained by constant fighting. The Temple of Karnak, which dwarfs St. Peter’s at Rome, and many other colossal building projects undertaken.
c. 1250 The Children of Israel come into the Promised Land. (Palestinian Early Iron Age).
c. 1150. The Decline of Egyptian power (XXIst Dynasty). The Siege of Troy may be assigned to this period.
c. 1000. David, King in Israel, makes Jerusalem his capital.
c. 950. Solomon builds the temple in Jerusalem.
c. 950–900. The Homeric period. Although the Odyssey was not written down until a much later period, the poem probably altered little. The herb Moly, perhaps the earliest ancestor of the Mandrake, is mentioned in the tenth Book. Kirke has turned Odysseus’ men into swine. He sets forth to rescue them and is met by the god Hermes, who offers him the herb, whereby he may overcome the magic of Kirke. The plant is described with some minuteness. “It was black at the root, but the flower was like to milk. ‘Moly’ the gods call it, but it is hard for mortal man to dig, howbeit, with the gods, all things are possible.”
883–859. Ashur-nasir-pal II makes Assyria an armed camp. He began the reign of terror which made the cruelty of the Assyrians a byword.
874. The foundation of Carthage.
776. Greek chronology begins with the first Olympiad.
753. Roman chronology begins with the foundation of the city of Rome.
704–681. Sennacherib, King of Assyria. He besieges Jerusalem, but raises the siege, perhaps on account of plague.
c. 700. Isaiah, the prophet.
669–633. Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria. He gathered a huge library, many of the “books” being copies of older texts, some very old. There are some 800 medical prescriptions including one for toothache (cf. c.2250 B.C. above), a local application containing, among other things, mustard! The prescriptions are largely magical, and contain many incantations.
612. Fall of the Assyrian empire. Nineveh destroyed by the Medes and Persians.
594. Solon codifies Athenian law.
587. Destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon.
539. Babylon falls to Cyrus the Persian. The end of the “Babylonian Captivity”.

(To be continued)

CORRESPONDENCE

BRONCHIAL TUBE AND BLOCKER

Sir.—In their observations under this heading in your May issue your correspondents, referring to the article by Dr. Leatherdale and myself (Brit. J. Anaesth. (1955), 27, 556), state that the indications for one lung anaesthesia “will always continue”—and then give the reasons why they advocate the insertion of endobronchial tube or blocker under direct vision, through a bronchoscope. This conventional method presents little difficulty to my co-author, Dr. Leatherdale, since he has had the undisputed advantage of being trained by a colleague well versed in the art. To me, however, and to hundreds of others who have not enjoyed the privilege of such training, the accurate location, through a bronchoscope, of endobronchial tube or blocker is no easy matter: moreover the tubes and blockers used in this procedure are readily dislodged.

We wouldn’t presume to suggest to experts how they should tackle the sort of job they meet every day. When we published the description of the tube and blocker which can be passed blindly we had in mind the predicament of the anaesthetist called on to work in a field in which he is not thoroughly at home. I still believe that anaesthetists in this category will intubate or block a bronchus more accurately, and with less disturbance to the patient, by the blind method we describe and, what is more, these shaped tubes and blockers are less likely to become displaced.

It is a reasonable assumption that a patient on whom one lung anaesthesia is contemplated will have been examined through a standard bronchoscope shortly before operation. This investigation is well within the province of a trained anaesthetist. The art of using the specially

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