Book Reviews

INJURIES OF THE HAND. By Ronald FURLONG, F.R.C.S., Assistant Orthopaedic Surgeon, St Thomas's Hospital; Orthopaedic Surgeon, Rowley Bristow Hospital, Pyrford, and Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead. 10×6½ in. Pp. vii+215, with 99 figures. Index. 1957. London: J. & A. Churchill Ltd. Price 36s.

This is an excellent short text-book on hand injuries, with most of the emphasis on the problems of tendon surgery. As one has come to expect from the Orthopaedic Department of St Thomas's Hospital, the approach is straightforward and practical. There is no blind adherence to tradition, and the methods of treatment advocated are clearly the result of experience—they have been included because they work. Here and there the advice contained is dogmatic, and alternative methods are briefly discussed or perhaps not mentioned. Dogmatism, however, is surely one of the essentials of elementary teaching, and this book loses nothing by being positive in its approach. It is written in a pleasant, if racy, style, and is admirably illustrated; indeed the reviewer was most impressed by the quality and variety of the photographic illustrations and by the virtual absence of diagrams.

If there is to be any criticism it must, I feel, be on the subject of emphasis. In the publishers' blurb the book is described as being "for the junior surgeon who deals with hand injuries in Casualty Departments. It should also prove of inestimable value to general practitioners in districts where

(a) FIG. 86 (b)
These elastic garters are simple to make and are effective in use.

casualty surgery at cottage hospitals forms part of their duties"—perhaps an unfortunate reference, when one considers the emphasis the author himself rightly places on surgical skill and experience in the primary treatment of the injured hand. The description of the evaluation and treatment of major hand injuries is surely inadequate. The author explains this on the grounds that such subjects as the replacement of large areas of skin loss are the proper province of the plastic surgeon, but this argument does not apply where plastic surgical experience is not immediately available. Surely, too, it loses some of its force when the subject of tendon injuries is dealt with so thoroughly and in so great detail. The primary treatment of the major hand injury is just the problem that may confront the surgeon who is on his own. There is in the evaluation of the extent of injury, in the ingenuity

required to obtain skin cover, and in the estimate of final function, for which the primary operation is so vital a preliminary, all the art of surgery compressed into a small compass. In this book the problem is indeed tackled, and with proper emphasis on careful cleansing and excision, primary skin cover, and the pre-eminent importance of function in the plan for treatment; nevertheless, it would have been better had these subjects been dealt with in greater detail.

The problem of tendon injuries is most beautifully described and illustrated. The author's results in tendon surgery have long excited our admiration, and this book gives some indication of how these results have been achieved. One typical example of the practical nature of the instruction contained in it is the elastic garter splint for assisted active finger exercises—how much simpler than the elaborate rehabilitation methods which have been described, and which are beyond the scope of the average physiotherapy department (Fig. 86). The practical common-sense approach to the surgery of hand injuries is indeed the most striking feature of this book, and it is strongly recommended to all interested in the subject.—E. Mervyn EVANS.

CHIRURGIE ORTHOPÉDIQUE DES PARALYSIES. By R. Merle D'AUBIGNÉ, Professeur de Clinique chirurgicale orthopédique et réparatrice à la Faculté de Médecine de Paris; J. BÉNASSY, Chirurgien-Assistant des Hôpitaux de Paris; and J.-O. RAMADIER, Chirurgien-Assistant des Hôpitaux de Paris, with twelve other collaborators. 10 × 7 in. Pp. 431, with 171 figures. Index. 1956. Paris: Masson et Cie, Éditeurs. Price Broché 4,200 fr. Cartonné toile 5,000 fr.

The surgical relief of paralytic disorders—an important aspect of orthopaedics—has steadily advanced in recent years. Those who wish to master it must be rather more than amateur neurologists and possess soundness of judgment well above the average. The number of books on the surgery of paralysis is small, perhaps because it is so hard to tackle the subject systematically and also because few people have experience in the treatment of every variety of paralytic disorder. So this book by Professor Merle d'Aubigné and his colleagues is unusually valuable. Those who expect to find an encyclopaedia will be disappointed; for example, the repair of nerves is dismissed in twenty-two pages, the treatment of post-poliomyelitic paralysis of the forearm and hand is dealt with summarily; and there is nothing about the treatment of the more benign progressive disorders such as peroneal muscular atrophy. This is rather a collection of essays by many writers each dealing with a topic that he has mastered thoroughly; if this is appreciated the reader will be satisfied.

One of the happiest features of this book is the balanced account it gives of French, American and British practice, and the appreciation expressed by our Parisian colleagues of work done on the other side of the Channel and of the Atlantic is in places almost embarrassing in its warmth. This is yet another expression of the splendid relationship in the field of orthopaedics that has developed so rapidly since the war between those who speak French and those who speak English, and on the French side it has been inspired by one person pre-eminently—Merle d'Aubigné himself.

The book is divided into the following sections: paralysis of the upper limb; paralysis of the lower limb; painful amputation stumps and causalgia; paraplegia; hemiplegia in the adult; spastic paralysis in children; the treatment of poliomyelitis; and, lastly, a section on electrodiagnosis and physiotherapy in the management of peripheral nerve lesions.

The largest section is concerned with the upper limb and is outstandingly good, especially the chapters devoted to the palliative treatment of nerve injuries and to Volkmann's contracture. The reconstructive surgery of the lower limb is in itself a less lively subject, and here it is represented by only two sections, one on the palliative surgery of sciatic paralysis, the other on operations on the foot after poliomyelitis. The surgery of painful amputation stumps and of causalgia is discouraging and uncertain; the account of it given here is about as clear as anything on the subject can be. In the discussion on the interruption of central tracks for the relief of painful stumps the argument leading to the conclusion that antero-lateral cordotomy is the best operation is set out most elegantly.

Three conditions are covered in the section on paraplegia: injuries of the spinal cord, Pott's paraplegia and a postscript on paraplegia in scoliosis. Guttman's excellent work is warmly commended but Holdsworth's break with strict conservatism in the early treatment of traumatic paraplegia is fairly appraised too. At the end this is what we are told: "Operation should not be attempted except under conditions where both nursing and equipment are ideal for treatment by internal fixation of the spine. No operation should be regarded in itself as a method for treating the paraplegia. If undertaken in general or special departments of surgery not organised for the care of paraplegics the most frightful things (they are listed) may and probably will happen." This is translated a little freely but it is what they mean, and it is plain common sense. Readers may, like myself, find matters of detail to quarrel about in this and other parts of the book, but they are as nothing in comparison