Book Reviews

A History of the Canadian Orthopaedic Association. By R. I. HARRIS, M.B., F.R.C.S.(C.). 22 cm. (8½ in.) × 14 cm. (5½ in.). Pp. xi + 46. Printed by University of Toronto Press for the Canadian Orthopaedic Association.

The achievements of Canadian orthopaedics are such that it is difficult to realise that the Canadian Orthopaedic Association has been incorporated for but twenty years. The present slim volume by the beloved master, the late R. I. Harris, is an expansion of an invited address that he gave at the 1963 meeting of the Association. It traces not just the history of a professional body but the development of Canadian orthopaedics from its early days—largely by biographies of its pioneers, now deceased. Alas, R. I. H., one of the greatest among them, is no longer with us.

A chapter on The Accomplishments of the Canadian Orthopaedic Association includes, among much else, an account of the exchange fellowships that began in 1948. Of these, R. I. H., then president of the Canadian Orthopaedic Association, was the chief begetter. There is also a description of the joint meeting in Quebec, which led to the six-yearly meetings of the English-speaking Orthopaedic Associations, of which the Canadian, like the South African, is bilingual. There are useful dated lists of the travelling fellows and of the meeting places and presidents of the Canadian Association. In chronicling these important affairs, R. I. H., with his characteristic modesty and dignity, has failed to mention himself, though a chief architect of the Association. The gap is filled by a felicitous foreword from Dr F. P. Patterson.

This work is an important record of a great venture.—H. JACKSON BURROWS.

Studies of the Development and Decay of the Human Frame. By Joseph TRUETA, M.D., F.R.C.S., F.A.C.S., Nuffield Professor Emeritus of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Oxford. 29 cm. (11½ in.) × 23 cm. (9 in.). Pp. x + 389, with 503 figures. Index. 1968. London: William Heinemann Medical Books Ltd. Price £6 6s.

All orthopaedic surgeons should be grateful that Professor Joseph Trueta, who retired so recently from the Chair at Oxford, has gathered his many outstanding contributions to basic orthopaedic problems into one book with so little delay.

Trueta has added to orthopaedic scientific studies in an outstanding manner over many years. His fertile brain and acuity of observation have led to notable contributions in many directions, particularly to our knowledge of the vascular supply of bone, the early changes and vascular network of the femoral head in osteoarthritis, osteomyelitis and its effect upon epiphyseal growth in some cases, and finally the healing of fractures and the role of the vascular endothelium in bone formation. Like all research it has been criticised and some of his observations may be modified as more detailed experimental work is done. However, Trueta has stimulated others and himself led the way in many of the basic studies needed to comprehend orthopaedic disease and its problems. The first and longer half of the book is concerned with this.

Orthopaedic surgery has a poor research record, and much of what has been done has been confined to clinical observation and the results of treatment. Whilst these researches should not be denigrated there are many problems in orthopaedic surgery that we shall not understand until we comprehend, as a result of laboratory research, the physiology and biochemistry of the tissues with which we work. Trueta has done much to develop our knowledge of the minute anatomy and cellular behaviour of these tissues. To read this book reminds one of the many seeds that he sowed developing into vigorous fields of research in many centres. If British orthopaedic surgery does not follow this stimulating lead from Trueta and develop laboratory research it will lag behind that of other countries.

When one comes to the later chapters it is possible to be more critical. He shows on page 310, Figure 406, a typical infantile idiopathic scoliosis associated with a hiatus hernia. After control of the herniation and the use of a Jansen's plaster bed the curve disappeared. We know in fact that 95 per cent of these curves disappear spontaneously and it would seem unlikely that it could be attributed to the treatment.

In discussing Sudeck's atrophy, of which he has a very considerable experience, he rightly emphasises the importance of lack of movement as the initial cause. He does not perhaps stress