

may be held twice yearly (Spring and Autumn) at the General Hospital, Northampton, provided not less than 15 general practitioners are accepted for attendance at each course.

*General practitioners wishing to avail themselves of the facilities set out in this schedule should apply to the Chairman, Post Graduate Medical Education Committee 91 Banbury Road, Oxford.*

## SOUTHEND

### Southend General Hospital

An abdominal operation session is held every Saturday afternoon from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., at which Post Graduates are welcome. There is no fee. Trains from Fenchurch Street to Southend or to Westcliff are as follows, but Post Graduates are advised to check them in case of

alterations, the time of arrival is stated in brackets. To Southend: 12.1 (1.7), 12.7 (1.19), 12.13 (1.25), 12.25 (1.32), 12.32 (1.46). To Westcliff: 12.1 (1.3), 12.7 (1.15), 12.25 (1.28), 12.32 (1.44). Trains returning to Fenchurch Street are as follows. From Southend: 7.34 (8.55), 8.4 (9.56). From Westcliff: 7.3 (8.30), 7.39 (8.55), 8.8 (9.56).

## CONFERENCES, ANNUAL MEETINGS, ETC.

**British Orthopaedic Association.** Annual meeting at Bristol on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, October 13, 14 and 15, 1949.

**Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland.** Annual meeting at the Royal College of Surgeons on Thursday, November 3, followed by dinner at the Savoy Hotel.

# BOOK REVIEWS

## A COMPANION IN SURGICAL STUDIES

By IAN AIRD, Ch.M.(Ed.), F.R.C.S.(Ed.). Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone. 1949. 63s.

The history of the surgical textbook in the English language dates back to the 17th century, when 'Paré's Collected Works' was first translated into English by Thomas Johnson and published in 1694, for this volume covers practically all surgery as it was practised at that time and remained one of the most popular works of reference throughout most of that century.

The first English surgeon to write a textbook was Richard Wiseman, surgeon to three Stuart kings, whose 'Several Chirurgical Treatises' covered surgery as practised in this country at the time of its publication in 1676. This was followed by Lorenz Heister's 'General System of Surgery,' which was published in English in 1748 and proved a very popular work. But it was the 19th century which really saw the textbook becoming a regular feature of medical literature, for previously surgeons wrote essays on particular subjects with which they were acquainted and perhaps later issued these in the form of collected papers. There is a feeling that the increase in the importance of examinations as stepping stones to a surgical career has been the main stimulus to the writing of textbooks, and thus at an early date we see an appropriate diversion of the ways; one group of shorter volumes to cater for the undergraduate and the other purporting to cover all the field of surgery as practised at the time, and written for the specialist in surgery either as a reference book or as an aid to study for special qualifications. Early examples of the first are Liston's 'Elements of Surgery' published in 1835, and Erichsen's 'Science and Art of Surgery' of 1853, while Holmes' 'System of Surgery' in four

volumes (1860), made up of the contributions of a large number of specialists, is typical of the second. The fact that for a century this type of volume has remained a compilation of chapters by many writers is an indication of the widening practice of surgery, which makes it impossible for a single person, however gifted, to write such a book entirely with his own hand.

It is therefore refreshing to find something new in this class, a comprehensive volume on surgery written for the specialist, yet all the work of one man. This book is such a book; as its name implies it is really not a textbook but a companion, for a considerable knowledge of practical surgery is assumed, and Professor Aird set himself a stupendous task in writing it and he has succeeded admirably. The subjects of orthopaedic and plastic surgery have been excluded, but otherwise the book covers the whole field, and by inserting no illustrations he has brought it within the scope of 1,000 pages (plus a full index), yet there is no subject which is not mentioned; one of the most valuable features is the large number of references to original articles in the literature, which will serve as a guide to the reader who seeks further information, while the many historic allusions add to its interest. Where the author has not personal experience he refrains from comment, yet on other occasions he gives the fruits of his own careful observations and investigations. As is inevitable in a work of this size there are a few misprints and a number of statements which will arouse controversy, but this monumental work will mark a milestone in British surgical literature and will be as valuable to the trained and practising surgeon as it will be vital to the candidate for higher surgical qualifications.

R.M.W.