

FOREWORD

BY

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THE treatment of fractures and dislocations is one of the oldest forms of surgical handicraft, and the influence of many of the principles and procedures expounded in such clear detail in the corpus of Hippocratic texts can be witnessed in the practice of casualty surgery at the present day. Thus Hippocrates taught the importance of the early reduction of deformity, and the value of continued traction as a means of maintaining correct alignment of the limb. But despite the antiquity of the theoretical knowledge thus available, every young surgeon in his turn, when first confronted with responsibility for the 'setting' of fractures, has to acquire his own sense of manipulative skill, usually by the process of trial and error. In this stimulating monograph Mr Charnley has sought to illuminate some of the obscurities of the mechanics of fracture treatment, and he has succeeded, in a most vivid fashion, in creating by means of text and illustration a series of mental pictures—a frame of reference, so to say—whereby the young surgeon can get the 'feel' of a fracture; first the anatomy of the displacement, and then that confident 'clinical sense' of precise correction of the deformity which follows a skilful manipulative act of reduction. Mr Charnley has also incorporated in this book his original observations on the genesis and prevention of joint stiffness; his well-known ingenious work on the design and uses of the walking caliper; and not least in importance, an invaluable chapter in which he presents a critical study of the various types of modern plaster-of-Paris technique.

Although the author has addressed his message primarily to the young casualty surgeon there is much in this monograph which will persuade the experienced orthopædic surgeon to re-examine some of his most cherished presuppositions.

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