

THE MECHANICS OF SURGERY, comprising Detailed Descriptions, Illustrations, and Lists of the Instruments, Appliances, and Furniture Necessary in Modern Surgical Art. By CHARLES TRUAX: Chicago, 1899.

THIS is a large volume of over a thousand pages, and at first sight appears like an instrument-maker's catalogue, minus the prices. The

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author states that his aim has been "to illustrate and describe such mechanical appliances as research and experience have proved to be suitable or best adapted to the purposes for which they were designed." This he has done in a fairly acceptable manner. Also, he states that text-book descriptions are usually unsatisfactory, but that "the instrument-maker, on the other hand, who happens to be of a mechanical turn of mind and fairly well informed in operative surgery, can usually give judicious advice in the selection of instrument patterns." This is more true of the inexperienced than of the experienced surgeon. Another of the author's objects is to secure a standard nomenclature for surgical instruments. For this effort he is deserving of all praise. He thinks there is a place in the library of every practitioner of medicine or surgery for such a book, and states that "if this volume fails to fulfil the expectations of its author, it may perhaps serve as a stimulus to some abler mind to prepare a work which will better meet all requirements." The author evidently appreciates the fact that there is wanting a work which will elucidate the mechanics of surgery. That this is so there can be no doubt. That the book has taken the form it has is consequent on the fact that its author is an instrument-maker and dealer. Instead of a treatise on principles of mechanics as applied to surgery, we have detailed descriptions of instruments; instead of discussing the best means of accomplishing an object, he gives a description of the various appliances which are used. What would be of service is his candid opinion of the relative merits of the various instruments, with his reasons therefor; but that evidently is too much to expect of one who is financially interested in the various instruments he describes. The author evidently appreciates what should be done, for we get glimpses of his possibilities in his discussion of the manner of holding a needle and in his short comments on the mode of use of various instruments. He knows, but he has not the courage to state his convictions. Personally, we do not think that the book is scientific enough to deserve success; it still breathes too much of the trade spirit. Surgeons want a book written from the stand-point of a user not a seller of instruments; they want to be informed as to utility not fashion. Principles live, but fashions change. The book is, however, much better than a mere catalogue, and the author deserves some praise for taking a step in the right direction, even though it be not so decided a one as the subject demands and the author himself is capable of making.

G. G. D.