
To write or, as in this case, lecture, on a highly technical subject for a lay audience is a test which most scientists are wise to avoid. When the attempt is successfully made, the achievement may well be regarded as one of the highest order. One would hesitate to use the word brilliant of this book, since the effect is one not of dazzle but of reflected lighting. Dr. Corner has succeeded in making clear not only the broad outlines but many of the intricacies of his subject, and has at the same time illuminated the philosophical applications. The first lecture, entitled The Embryo as Germ and as Archive, gives what is perhaps the best summary of human embryology to be found in the literature. With the judicious use of a number of excellent illustrations, the author has produced a consistent narrative told with a simplicity that could be achieved only as the outcome of profound scholarship. The second lecture, Prenatal Fate and Foreordination, will be of particular interest to paediatricians, since it deals with the vicissitudes of the embryo before birth—including the recent work on the effects of rubella and the rhesus factor—and also discusses the respective roles of heredity and environment on the development of the ovum. The third lecture, The Generality and the Particularity of Man, integrates the preceding consideration of the physical nature of man with his higher attributes. It is in his handling of this age-old controversy—one that has inflamed mediaeval saints and neo-Darwinians alike—that the author’s own philosophy emerges, and in which his lucidity of expression and clarity of mind are most notably apparent. The scope of the human mind, the freedom of human decision, are bound up inextricably with the generalization of the body. That respect for the body does not imply disrespect for the soul is a lesson which has been learnt only slowly and painfully. To have the basis of such a belief expounded by a scientist pre-eminent in the field of embryology should prove of the first interest to layman and physician alike.


This book will be welcomed by all those responsible for the medical care of children, since not only are many skin diseases peculiar to infancy and childhood, but others—which also affect adults—show during early life features which make the text-book descriptions of the conditions as observed in adults confusing or misleading. The authors fairly face the fact that dermatology is still far from being an exact science, and group the diseases described, partly etiologically, partly pathologically, and partly on the basis of clinical similarity. Sections on congenital cutaneous anomalies, contagious diseases, and syphilis have been contributed by Drs. E. F. Traub, N. Sobel and H. Beerman respectively. The book is well produced, and liberally illustrated with black and white photographs. It is regrettable that it has been possible to include only four colour plates (of scarlet fever, measles, and chicken-pox), since the subject calls for particularly the illustration of photographs, however excellent, have only a limited value. Treatment is dealt with from the viewpoint of the practising physician, and the book as a whole will be well recommended.


This is a book of outstanding importance, both on account of the wealth of material it contains and also because it breaks new ground in the literature of British paediatrics. Professor McNeil describes it as ‘the social history of children, the children of the poor, in our country from the beginning of the industrial era to the present day.’ It is a history which urgently needed writing, and a history much of which makes sad reading. At a time when planning for the future is apt to obscure the mistakes of the past, it is essential to take stock of the social services for children in the light of knowledge of how they have been evolved. It is this critical and historical assessment which Dr. Craig has now provided. It is generally realized that the industrial revolution, with the consequent change of a small and predominantly agricultural population into a large and predominantly urban one, provided this country with problems which were in many ways unique. But it is hardly appreciated quite how low a standard of child life was reached during the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century in terms of the minimal resources of state aid or private charity at that time. By comparison, the history of the last fifty years is one of outstanding achievement, and though the child health services have passed through a precarious and sickly infancy, the child has not only proved itself viable but even shows indications of becoming robust.

Dr. Craig has divided his book into four main parts, dealing respectively with the historical survey, care of child life at the present time, the future, and legislation relating to child and adolescent welfare; a valuable series of appendices on general and special hospitals, institutions, categories of handicapped pupils requiring special education, and the growth of social paediatrics, is included. There is also a selected bibliography. The book is profusely illustrated, and the general production comes up to the high standard which the publishers have led us to expect of them.

This is a book which should be read and constantly referred to; it should have the success which its outstanding merit, wealth of information, and practical value amply deserve.