

**Modern Methods of Infant Management (Before, During and After Birth).** By W. R. F. COLLIS, M.D., F.R.C.P., Paediatrician, Rotunda Hospital; NINIAN Mc.I. FALKNER, M.D., Sc.D., F.R.C.O.G., Ex-Master, Rotunda Hospital; P. C. D. MACCLANCEY, L.R.C.P. and S.I., Assistant Paediatrician, Rotunda Hospital; M. MORAN, S.R.N., Sister in charge Infants' Department, Rotunda Hospital. 1948. London: William Heinemann Medical Books. Pp. 285. (Price 17s. 6d.)

In his preface, Dr. Collis describes this as 'what the doctor should know that the nurse should know,' presented in as practicable a manner as possible. . . . The rules (of infant management) are exact and clear.' The book is designed to present the practices of the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin.

Section I is on antenatal care and the reception of the newborn baby. Section II describes the management and feeding of the newborn baby, and Section III details the treatment of various digestive difficulties without giving more than brief notes on the clinical pictures and no advice at all on differential diagnosis. Section IV deals with prematurity and various disorders and diseases of the neonatal period. The prematurity section is one of the better parts of the book, but it is surely bad teaching to-day to encourage anyone, let alone a nurse acting on her own initiative, to give intramuscular blood for haemorrhagic disease of the newborn. Every nurse or doctor attending newborn babies should have vitamin K or analogues for intramuscular administration, especially since there are reports of haemolytic disease in first babies of mothers who had had blood injections in their infancy.

The book is marred by four defects. It is not always easy to find what is practised or advised by the Rotunda School. For example, many of us to-day are exercised as to whether the psychiatrists (e.g. 'Problems of Early Infancy,' 1947, Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation) are right in insisting that babies should be with their mothers all the time.

The problem is not mentioned. The second defect is that treatment is described without the indications being given. To say in reference to cases of gastroenteritis, 'if necessary give castor oil' without explaining when this treatment is needed, is unwise in a book designed for nurses. Thirdly, much of the dogma handed on is without adequate foundation. Thus in Section I there is much dietetic advice, some at least of which appears to be uncritically assembled and doubtfully valid. Again, the advice against changing the napkin before feeding the baby is ill-considered, and the recommended custom of 'potting' the baby from one week old requires reevaluation. It is a waste of the mother's time, for it has no value in relation to the acquisition of permanent bowel control and, before the age of six months, is of little value in saving washing.

The fourth criticism is the very cursory revision, which applies both to the text and index. Thus the calorie of dietetics is the large calorie, which raises 1 kg. of water one degree centigrade. One scoop of dried milk is not an ounce. It is surprising to learn that among the sources of vitamins in babies' diet are 'chestnut leaves, animal subs (sic) and putrefied fish meal.' More seriously, it is a pity that any paediatrician should mention one particular proprietary food without condemning the misleading statements the proprietors issue to the effect that it is not uncommon for a mother's breast milk to be plentiful but unsuitable for her child. In discussing the causes of constipation in infants, no mention is made of under-feeding, the commonest cause in London children, but 'hereditary constipation' is cited.

This lack of proportion, or lack of revision, appears in the emphasis placed on the necessity for a daily action of the bowels. In this country there is a greater need to discourage mothers and nurses from dosing their children than to encourage them to purge those happy breast-fed infants who pass a soft stool every second or third day.

The book is conveniently sized and well printed.