BOOK REVIEWS


Here is an entirely new book which deals with the various aspects of feeding babies in health and sickness, and which approaches the subject in a somewhat different way from previous textbooks on infant feeding. It contains a large amount of information set out in a way which makes it simple to read and easy to digest; the facts and figures relating to infant feeding, which everyone dealing with babies requires to know or to refer to occasionally, are all to be found in the text or in separate tables; appropriate references are given at the end of each chapter. It is, however, complementary to previous books on infant feeding which go into special aspects, such as artificial feeding in greater detail, and does not necessarily replace them in the library.

The authors are known to have a thorough knowledge of the needs of both the undergraduate and postgraduate student of today, and this is expressed not only in the simplicity of their explanations and of the methods they advocate but also in the easy and informal style of their writing. It is obvious from the comprehensiveness of the book that there is more in it than the medical student will require for his examinations, but there is very little in it that the doctor ought not to have read before he starts to practice.

The book is also notable for the thoughtful and moderate approach to the numerous problems of infant feeding, and the authors, who in the introduction apologize for their dogmatism, need hardly have done so.

The physiology of lactation and the preparation required for successful breast feeding before the birth of the child, together with an account of the technique of breast feeding and the troubles that may be met, are given full space and a clear exposition which is as welcome as it is likely to do a great deal of good in time to come. The causes of the common types of feeding difficulties are simply discussed, and it is unavoidable that this must be to some extent unsatisfactory to the person who wants an easy answer, because it is surely in the treatment of feeding difficulties in infancy that no book, however good, can take the place of personal experience and personal teaching.

The drawings with which the text is illustrated are clear and helpful, with the exception of the two showing the methods of splinting the limbs for intravenous therapy, in both of which the strapping is unsatisfactory. On the same subject the statement is made that in an ill-equipped hospital large instruments suitable for adults may be used for cutting down and inserting the cannula; it is this impression which still causes the failure of many such attempts throughout the country.

It is safe to say that this is a book which every young practitioner should read and which every young paediatrician will wish to possess, and there can be little doubt that it will become an established favourite in a very short time.


By delaying the writing of this review I have discovered how very readable this book is found to be by medical students: a good thing, for it is excellent in substance. Out of 695 pages, 200 deal with the diseases established before birth or in the first month of life, and though, when first turning over the pages, 120 of them on congenital malformations seemed a lot, the proportion is right.

The chapter on history-taking has a section of guidance in taking a psychiatric history which deserves a more general heading than 'Behaviour Problems' for, as is pointed out, 'the child who is emotionally disturbed is likely to suffer in physical well being.' It is in dealing with difficult subjects in which organic and psychological factors are both concerned, that one most admires the balanced and helpful views concisely expounded. Diagnosis and treatment are both well done; success in the former will be helped by the many good illustrations and in the latter by the author’s practical outlook, as for example in the suggested oxygen tent for premature babies.

The book is well printed; misprints are rare, perhaps 'bronchiectasis of the salivary ducts' was one. A few errors of detail remain to be corrected, e.g. on BCG, and occasionally a superseded technique is recommended. Gore and Palmer's (1949) figures on the weight of children up to the age of 5 years should be given instead of the table quoted. Constipation in older children and incontinence of faeces deserve mention. Such minor criticisms can be made because the book is very good and will certainly have further editions.