BOOK REVIEWS


This book, which is attractively produced in an effective combination of serif and sanserif types, is designed as a paediatric handbook for students and practitioners. Although there are already enough full-scale textbooks of paediatrics, there is still a place for an introductory work of this nature. While many of the sections, such as those on fluid and electrolyte balance and on normal growth and development, are models of compression and lucidity, the quality of the work as a whole is uneven, and it contains many statements which will mislead the public to whom it is directed. The following are some of the detailed criticisms which occur to the reviewer.

Although it is stated that breast feeding is 'probably superior to artificial feeding', insufficient emphasis is given to the desirability of breast feeding from all aspects in the first three months of life.

The various syndromes of vitamin deficiency are succinctly described, but their rarity under normal conditions of care is not brought out clearly; and elsewhere, in a discussion of anorexia, a pusillanimous attitude to the effect of the popular press and of advertisements on the nervous parent is shown in a recommendation of vitamin therapy in the presence of this symptom for the purpose of allaying parental fear of vitamin deficiency.

When the routine immunization measures which should be carried out are outlined, the efficiency and safety of pertussis immunization is too lightly assumed.

Obesity is unjustifiably included among the minor psychiatric symptoms of childhood, and is described as being in almost all cases solely due to a pathologically high caloric intake; this well worn hypothesis has never fitted the facts and is misleading. The value of the section on disorders of speech, reading and hearing, appears to have been damaged by over-compression; even within the space allotted it could have been more informative.

The chapter on treatment deals almost entirely with antibiotics and cortisone. Useful tables of drug dosage are given, and a quick reference table giving the emergency treatment of 25 types of poisoning is included.

Although the proper care of the newborn baby is well described, an astonishingly naive attitude to natural mother-baby relationships is shown when what is called 'the rooming-in plan' (in which the newborn baby is not kept apart from his mother in the first few days of life) is described as if it were a new and untried technique of no economic and as yet unproven psychological value.

In many places space has been well saved by giving aetologies in list form. Nevertheless an opportunity has been missed here of imparting valuable information without any expenditure of space; for these lists are not in any significant order, nor do they make any reference to the extent of our present ignorance of aetiology. For example, under the heading 'Congenital Disorders' it is not stated that we are quite ignorant of the aetiology of nine out of ten cases, and the first three causes listed are (1) infection during pregnancy, (2) poor maternal diet, and (3) maternal exposure to radiation. Exactly the same strictures apply to the paragraph on mental deficiency; and peptic ulcer heads the list of causes of melena.

The sections on prematurity, infection and upper respiratory infection are good, but there is no general account of the special nature of infection in the early weeks and months of life; and it is surprising to see that while the tuberculin patch test is described quite rightly as unreliable, no reference is made to the tuberculin jelly test which carefully performed gives results which correlate very closely with those of the 1/1,000 intradermal Mantoux test. The period of isolation of cases of poliomyelitis is admittedly arbitrary, but the minimum of one week here recommended is hardly safe. The statement that nasal drops are injurious to the mucous membrane if given for more than three to four days is not borne out by experience so far as aqueous drops are concerned and seems likely to encourage inadequate treatment of recurrent upper respiratory infections.

In the chapter on gastro-intestinal disease the periodic syndrome is dismissed more briefly than the importance of its differential diagnosis and management warrant in a six-line paragraph under the heading 'Cyclical Vomiting'; and the fluid intake recommended in the treatment of gastro-enteritis (2½ oz. per lb. body weight per day) is inadequate to allow for rehydration and for continued loss in the stools; nor is any specific reference made to the danger of rapid rehydration with potassium-deficient fluids. A list of seven liver function tests is not accompanied by any estimate of their value in infancy, which is low. The section on intestinal obstruction has been unbalanced by the omission of Hirschsprung's disease and fibrocystic disease of the pancreas as causes.

The chapter on 'allergic diseases' is commendably short, but nevertheless the value of allergic investigations and anti-allergic treatment is somewhat overstressed in relation to that of long term physical and psychological care, especially in the case of asthma.

This book in its present form could not be put unreservedly in the hands of students as a sound introduction to paediatrics, but fairly extensive revision could greatly improve its value.


After the recent appearance of two new textbooks from the Continent, new editions of established works from America, and smaller volumes of child health and disease in this country, it is a pleasure to welcome the fifth edition
of the standard British textbook of diseases of children. For this Dr. Philip Evans joins Professor Moncrieff as editor in place of Dr. Donald Paterson, regrettedly departed to Canada.

The growth of the subject of paediatrics is exemplified in this as well as in the other major textbooks by an increase in size and unfortunately in price. This trend was shown in the 1949 edition and shows no sign of abating. It is timely that the present edition should appear so soon after the other works, and the reader who is making up his mind to spend what is relatively a large sum on a paediatric textbook cannot now complain that his choice is restricted.

In 'G., B. and T.', as 'Diseases of Children' is usually known in this country the intending buyer will find all that is best in British paediatric practice attractively produced and edited to show a minimum of overlap. As is inevitable when there are 50 contributors, there is a certain amount of unevenness, and some sections, in spite of the lapse of only four years between this and the previous edition, are scarcely up to date. As long as textbooks are put on the market in a bound form, so long will much of their matter necessarily be copied from one edition to another, while the rapidly moving sections will be out-dated by the time they appear in print. There is much to be said for the loose-leaf system adopted recently by Debre and Lelong whereby those branches of paediatrics in which the more rapid advances are being made can be brought up to the minute by the re-writing of a small section of the book rather than a completely new edition.

'Diseases of Children' by Moncrieff and Evans contains some new chapters and shows evidence throughout of careful revision of practically all of them, and the book is worthy to hold its place not only by comparison with its previous editions but also with the various foreign works. It is likely to retain its place as the standard British paediatric textbook for many years to come.


The new editor of this popular Year Book, Dr. Sidney S. Gellis, is to be congratulated not only on maintaining the tradition set by his editorial predecessors, but on the vast amount of knowledge which has been condensed into such a small space.

What are regarded as advances—and here the editor has a most invidious task—are presented under the customary headings which will be familiar to readers of the previous editions. As usual, the abstracts are preponderantly from the American literature, there being some four American articles to every one from the rest of the world. This may be an index of the relative amounts of paper devoted to paediatrics by the different parts of the world, the editor's assessment of the relative value of the world's contributions to paediatric literature, or may simply represent the scope of his reading. As in previous years, many of the articles are followed by observations of selected commentators; and as is also customary, some of these are helpful, many are patronizing and others just naive. The value of the abstracts would not be reduced if these comments were omitted.


Sixteen contributors from nine different European countries combine to present this textbook on the practice of continental paediatrics. We in this country are used to British and American textbooks and the language difficulty has prevented many of us from being fully acquainted with continental practice. For this reason an English edition of Fanconi and Wallgren's textbook, edited by Dr. Collis with the help of the translator, Dr. Kawerau, will be welcome. The differences in British and Continental practice appear more those of detail than of principle, but paediatricians here will be glad to have available a book of reference by which to compare the two.

It is well-nigh impossible for one person to review the contents of a compendium such as this, particularly when the contributions by such well known workers in their own widely separated fields reach such a high standard. Suffice it to say that paediatricians wanting to know anything about anything will find it here. Misspellings and mispronunciation abound throughout the book, as do uniformly excellent illustrations, and the colour photographs reach a very high standard. Seven guineas is a lot to pay for a book, but in this one gets a lot for one's money.


This is not, as its title might suggest, an attack on the lunatic bureaucracy, but a readable account of psychiatry intended for the general practitioner. The intention is excellent for there are not enough psychiatrists to deal with all the neuroses and psychosomatic disorders, and most of these can be treated by doctors who are not specially trained.

Only the first two chapters are devoted to childhood and adolescence, but many mental troubles showing up in adult life have their roots in childhood, and this view recurs throughout the later chapters. Almost any paediatrician could spend an entertaining and useful evening browsing over the book, skipping the banal or turgid passages and enjoying those which stimulate or intrigue. Part of the pleasure would be anthropological; the American adolescent grows up so differently from our own that many of the statements cannot be applied directly to disorders of behaviour seen in the British way of life. The difference may be perceived in the illustrations. At first sight they look as though they might have been taken from an American comic strip or the humorous page of The Saturday Evening Post, yet they are true illustrations; they add light to the instruction given in the text, and if their secondary purpose is to catch the eye of the customer in the book shop, there's no great harm in that.