BOOK REVIEWS


The fact that a history of the British Paediatric Association has been published after only 25 years is, in itself, a compliment to its members. Those who read it will find a contemporary account of the great advances in recent years and of those who helped to model paediatrics in this country.

This interesting and well produced book pays tribute to the work of the B.P.A., especially during the war years when the Association turned its attention to current problems. Members may well feel proud of the contribution it has made.

The sensitive pen of Hector Cameron portrays the friendliness and good will on which the B.P.A. has thrived, and there are some delightful sketches of the great ones who have left their mark. Tribute is rightly paid to James Spence and Donald Paterson for their pre-eminence in founding the Association, and for their inspiration in choosing the lovely setting at Windermere for its scientific and friendly meetings. A book with which all those interested in British paediatrics may spend a happy evening. Thank you, Dr. Cameron.


This book deserves the success it has had. It is clear and easy to read and there is rarely anything to cavil at.

On page 85 it is suggested that the child should receive a little fruit juice occasionally. It is not seen clearly stated anywhere that babies who are not breast-fed should receive some vitamin C preparation daily, even before mixed feeding is started.

Dr. Gibbens’ advice on page 99 to tell the baby firmly that he mustn’t make a mess at meal times is un-fashioned, severe and liable to diminish the enjoyment the child will take in his food and therefore possibly conduce to feeding difficulties in the second year. Even more does I regret the emphasis on stopping thumb sucking at its outset, although certainly Dr. Gibbens explains that one must get to the root of the trouble. The same thing applies to the recommendation that mothers must ‘make a stand’ about children who wake and cry in the night. There is no mention, on pages 130-1 that in the early months the baby, not knowing the difference between night and day, may wake expecting a feed. Yet, on page 184, the excellent advice is given, ‘Give the baby a night feed and in a few minutes the whole household will have settled down’.

It is not clearly explained to the mother that napkin rash is commonly caused by fermentation of the urine after it is passed and no poisoning has ever resulted from the use of dusting powders containing 5% boric acid, which is put in to neutralize the alkalinity of the talc.

I doubt whether the average mother in this country would know how to take a rectal temperature on her first baby.

I would like more emphasis given to hunger as a cause of wind, and colic and vomiting from underfeeding is a rather surprising omission in a book which is as complete as this one is.

Is it not desirable that otorrhoea should immediately be put under the supervision of a doctor, rather than advising the mother to deal with it herself (p. 175)? Does diphtheria leave a child with a crippled heart? These are small criticisms of a book which is good, and very reasonably priced.


The Convocation Lecture of the National Children’s Home is given annually by a distinguished exponent of some aspect of child welfare practice. The first lecture, in 1946, was given by Sir James Spence, and in 1947 the lecturer was Professor Capon. From then onwards the lecturers have followed differing disciplines and it was only in 1956 that the choice fell once more on a practising paediatrician in the person of Professor Moncrieff.

The theme of the 1956 lecture is the ever-changing nature of the developing child, and throughout this brief survey of the changes which take place the wide variations in the normal child are stressed. Without attempting in any way to clutter up the issue with a mass of scientific facts Professor Moncrieff, in his fluent prose, re-emphasizes to all those concerned with the welfare of the developing child the necessity for remembering that change within wide limits is inherent and not to be regarded as some aberration calling for medical or psychological ‘therapy’.


Dr. Charlotte Naish received the ‘Sir Charles Hastings Clinical Essay Prize’ of the British Medical Association for the original manuscript of this book nine years ago. The author points out that much has been written on the subject in the past nine years: small and real advances