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 prescience 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 does not seem 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 unreasonably 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 do 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 Changing Child: The Convocation Lecture 1956 of the National Children’s Home. By Alan Moncrieff. (Pp. 31. 1s.) London: National Children’s Home. 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
have been made, but there has been a change of fashion rather than a great amount of new knowledge.

Dr. Naish writes as a general practitioner experienced in child welfare, and furthermore she is the mother of five children to whom she dedicates this book. It is not surprising, therefore, to find much common-sense and practical wisdom in these pages. Recently there has been a tendency to underfeed babies and it is refreshing to read the obvious statement that the most important thing of all is to feed the child. To provide as much as possible of that food from the breast is only a secondary consideration. There is no insistence on breast feeding alone if this leads to an underfed baby. There is, however, much good advice to help to ensure successful breast feeding.

The chapter on 'The Mind of the Mother' is admirable and should be read by all paediatricians. We are here given an insight into the emotional experiences of the newly delivered mother and a frank discussion of the various outside opinions influencing her at this time, including on occasions bad advice from doctors, nurses and health visitors.

The chapters dealing with the establishment of lactation are also particularly good. Dr. Naish classes the third to the sixth weeks as the danger weeks, as the majority of cases of failure in breast feeding occur then. She outlines the reasons for this and her recommendations for prevention of this failure are practical.

On p. 99 it is suggested that the most important remedy to stop a baby waking during the night is to put him in a room out of his mother's hearing. Few mothers would be happy with this arrangement, although most would agree to a separate room. The habit of waking at night usually disappears spontaneously if feeding is satisfactory. Meanwhile, it is surely better to feed the baby if he wakes from hunger. Three other minor criticisms are that on p. 131 sulphonamide is recommended for the treatment of breast abscess if penicillin fails. Most people would prefer to use another antibiotic. On p. 152 it is stated that a baby with a cleft palate cannot suck from a bottle. Many of these babies feed perfectly well from a bottle using a large, rather flabby teat. Furthermore, it is surely unnecessary to carry out a Wassermann test on every baby with such a common condition as sniffles, as recommended on p. 139.

The book is especially intended for general practitioners, midwives and health visitors. It is written in a pleasing style, set out well, making reading easy. Paediatricians will also profit from studying its pages.

**Physiology and Pathology of Infant Nutrition**, 2nd ed.


The Israeli authors of this book have the opportunity of seeing many nutritional disturbances which only occur infrequently nowadays in the western hemisphere, and this colours their whole work. In Part I, which deals with the physiology of nutrition, the chemical advantages of breast milk are demonstrated, and the normal flora of the infantile intestines are well described. It is probably not widely known that Proteus and P.s. pyocyaneus are present in the large bowel of two-thirds of normal infants, and 22% of them harbour paracolon bacilli. While the importance of breast feeding is adequately stressed, the psychological difficulties of the mother are sensibly and sympathetically considered. Artificial feeding is treated somewhat dogmatically, but some of the dogmata are sound, e.g., that the correct food for the child is that which gives an adequate gain in weight. Others are more questionable.

Many debatable recommendations are made about the management of the newly born and breast feeding. 'Rooming in' is said to cause a greater exposure to infection, the smoking mother is limited to five cigarettes a day, diazoxide and a previous mastitis are given as contraindications to breast feeding, and the newly born baby is given weak tea and saccharin before the milk comes in. In describing suction, the serious mistake is made of describing the areola as the nipple. In discussing prematurity the astonishing statement is made that retrolental fibroplasia occurs in 60% of all premature babies and that it may be connected with the early intake of vitamins A and D. Dried milk is relegated to one small paragraph. The advice to use cereal waters for diluting cow's milk will find little support, and the addition of fat to milk mixtures is a harmful anachronism. Vegetable puree containing mashed potatoes from a plate may be considered rather advanced for a baby of 4 months even in these days. The use of egg white before the age of 9 months is not advised for fear of allergy—surely an excess of caution. The very advanced methods of feeding the child from the third month onwards contrast strangely with the advice to feed the newly born on very weak formulae.

Part II is devoted to the pathology of nutrition. Many pages are devoted to the treatment of atrophy and decomposition, which are seldom met with nowadays. Hiatus hernia is apparently uncommon in Israel. Adrenal cortical insufficiency is poorly described, and renal acidosis and idiopathic hypercalcaemia are not mentioned. On the other hand, 'Nehlnarschaden' and rickets, which are now very rare, are dealt with at length. Overfeeding is placed high in the aetiology of gastroenteritis, in the antibiotic treatment of which no mention is made of chloramphenicol palmitate, and aureomycin is said to be equally efficient as chloramphenicol. Intravenous drip therapy is inadequately described, and the dietetic treatment unnecessarily complicated. An interesting final chapter on constitution and disease contains such a good description of 'lymphatism' as almost to persuade the reader of its existence.

The book suffers from translation. Many expressions are rendered too literally from the German, and this makes difficult reading. Spelling mistakes abound and nearly all infinitives are split. The book cannot be considered suitable for students, but the experienced paediatrician will find it useful if he comes across nutritional disorders which are now out of the ordinary.