ARCHIVES OF DISEASE IN CHILDHOOD

that child guidance clinics should work in close cooperation with child welfare centres in their areas, also, that courses on the emotional development of children should be arranged for school medical officers, doctors working in child welfare centres and general practitioners. They consider that the further development of the consultant paediatric services, provided there is close cooperation with the child guidance services, must react to the advantage of the maladjusted child.

The report is well written and stimulating, it will prove of great interest to all those working in the field of child health.


This is a depressing and dangerous book, written in journalese by two doctors who are directors at the Gesell Institute of Child Development at Yale University. In a book of 350 pages, which sets out to describe child behaviour and development, no mention is made of instinct or of anxiety or of love.

They postulate that 'the human organism seems to act as it does largely because of the way it is built' and that because of this the conclusion that individuality is largely inborn. Their assessment of the role played by the early family environment in infant or child's development is clearly stated as follows:

A favorable environment (home or otherwise) can, it appears, permit each individual to develop his most positive assets for living.

An unfavorable environment may inhibit and depress his natural potentials. But no environment, good or bad, can so far as we know change him from one kind of individual to another.

One can only assume their lack of experience with children or adults who have had the misfortune to have had an unhappy early relationship with their parents or come from a broken home or have suffered some other disaster in their early environment. When a child is brought up in a normal, happy home, he or she will naturally go through the battles of life but the secure external environment which has built up a stable internal environment in the child will help him to come through the battles each in his own way. When all goes well we do not see the effect of the happy home life in the child as such; it is implicit in the personality and individuality of the child.

One receives the impression that the authors are reassuring the parents. A plan of how a child is expected to develop is put before them: the child will naturally grow into maturity when all problems will have been solved, but maturity does not occur just because there is growth.

In Parts II and III they set themselves the task of advising on problems met with in the developing child. They succeed in giving the parents an adequate picture of patterns of behaviour in normal growth but when it comes to helping the parents to get an insight into the motivations that underlie all behaviour problems, their understanding is naive and one is amazed that in the sixth decade of this century they are determined to deny and ignore all the psychic factors which motivate behaviour.

Nevertheless the authors have put a great deal of work into the book and amassed a wealth of detailed information about the type of behaviour which might be expected to occur at different ages; but the book contains so many half-truths that one cannot wholeheartedly recommend it as a help to parents or paediatricians.


This book is addressed primarily to students working or intending to work in child guidance clinics, to medical practitioners and to medical and psychiatric social workers. It may have some value for such workers in India, where other books on this subject are perhaps not easily available, but it is not very well written, and it gives nothing that has not already been set out before in a rather more satisfactory way.

It contains long quotations from other workers in this particular field, and in places there is what appears to be a rather unnecessary inclusion of unpleasant details of a sexual nature.

Certainly it is not a book that should be recommended to our students or psychiatric social workers.


This book completes the trilogy begun with Infant and Child in the Culture of Today (1943) and The Child from Five to Ten (1946). But whereas the first two instalments drew freely on Dr. Gesell's long experience and numerous publications relating to infants and young children, Youth deals with an age-group with which he is clearly less familiar. Techniques which helped to clarify patterns of infant behaviour under standard conditions are clearly inadequate for any but the most superficial assessment of adolescents. Informal interviews and a battery of psychometric and other tests have been added, but if their interpretation is as uncritically naive as the section on somatotyping would suggest, it is not surprising that they have added little to current knowledge. The authors disarmingly admit that the sample on which the study was based was heavily biased to begin with, over 80% of the 165 subjects being drawn from socio-economic groups I and II, intelligence being substantially above average, and selection being largely determined by willingness to co-operate. They refrain from giving more than the barest minimum of statistical analysis of data on the surprising grounds that further tables would give a misleading emphasis on statistical precision. The text, however, would soon correct any such impression, since it is largely devoted to descriptions of 'maturity profiles, maturity trends and growth gradients' in such general terms that no amount of sub-division can mask their fundamental banality. We learn that youths at a given
age vary greatly in their capacity for making friends. 'A sad movie will invariably bring tears from a certain type of empathic girl, more often on the rotund side.' And so, one is tempted to ask, what?


Sexual precocity is a comparatively rare event which can be caused by at least twenty different conditions. In the past isolated cases have been described. This monograph contains a study of 69 patients, 50 girls and 19 boys, which have been pursued by the author. Some of his patients were first seen in the 1920s and therefore their development through 30 years was observed. Most of them have had their endocrine functions investigated fully. 'Constitutional' outnumber singly any single pathological factor. The author points out that laparotomy is usually unnecessary for the diagnosis of female pseudo-hermaphroditism as the cervix can be seen by urethroscopy and often the Fallopian tubes outlined after injection of opaque dye into the uterus.

The book is filled with facts—facts which are of great diagnostic importance. It is easy to complain of being asked continually to look at another page, but the author wanted to give the histories of his 69 patients in full and therefore devoted the second half of the book to this. Here are examples of constitutional precocity in girls and boys, and precocity following meningitis as well as precocity in association with cerebral tumour, tuberous sclerosis, congenital defect of the brain, adrenal hyperplasia, adrenal hyperfunction, carcinoma of the adrenal cortex, interstitial cell tumour of the testis, granulosa cell tumour of the ovary, female pseudohermaphrodite, Albright's syndrome, premature breast development only and hepatoblastoma. What a wealth of material!

The author reminds one of Longfellow's reaper:

'The heart for any fate,
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.'

for waiting has brightened the prognosis of some, especially those with adrenal hyperplasia, by the introduction of cortisolone therapy.

A minor criticism is the English. 'Practically' is frequently used for 'almost'; the passive voice is too often used when the active is needed and surely in a book of this kind, which may well become the standard work, the author should look up the original references and not give secondhand quotations.

The many photographs account for the price. No serious student will be deterred by minor criticisms from getting this book which is likely to become a classic.

Handbook of Poisons. By ROBERT H. DREISBACH. (Pp. 426; illustrated. $3.00.) Los Angeles, California: Lange Medical Publications. 1955.

The purpose of this book, according to the author, is to 'provide a concise summary of the diagnosis and treatment of clinically important poisons'. To this end he discusses in turn the clinical findings, treatment and prophylaxis appropriate to poisoning by a large number of toxic substances grouped in such categories as agricultural, industrial, house-hold, medicinal, and plant and animal poisons. In the first section he considers general principles, including legal, and in an appendix describes various types of resuscitation equipment. While some of his material is relevant only to the American scene, most of it is on industrial and medicinal poisons that may cause trouble in Britain.

Whether the author has succeeded in his purpose is rather questionable. The grammatical ambiguity in the opening words of the book quoted above is unfortunately symptomatic of the way the author has organized his material, for he presents it in such a way as to raise doubts about what sort of reader he has in mind, and in what circumstances the book is intended to be used. Some of it is too elementary for medical readers, for example, 'The sulphonamide derivatives are used in the treatment of bacterial infections'. Some of it is misplaced, for example, on treatment of acute poisoning by sulphonamides the reader is enjoined, under 'special problems', to treat agranulocytosis. Again, in a handbook apparently intended for quick reference in the event of a possible or actual emergency, it seems odd to read under 'prophylaxis' the warning, 'Do not prescribe sulphonamides unnecessarily'. Instructions like these in the section on sulphonamide poisoning are to be found in virtually every section of the book. Perhaps they make for completeness—and the book is indeed strikingly comprehensive—but the prospective purchaser would be well advised to examine it before deciding that it fills his need.


This is the first number of a series of reprints from the Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geneeskunde, with Dutch and English in parallel columns and all the charts and diagrams similarly bilingual. It is based upon data from the Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics, and Professor de Haas, with a team of collaborators, has skillfully succeeded in making dry figures come alive in interesting diagrams with shrewd and concise commentary. As in any atlas illustrations are the main attraction and here they are well produced in black and white. The figures from the health point of view are astonishingly good—better than in England and Wales for almost every age period in childhood except for the pre-school child where, in Holland, accidents take a very serious toll of life. Perinatal mortality offers some scope for further improvement. A plea must be made for including a definition of stillbirth (or live-birth) in publications of this type since there is still some confusion in international correspondence. This is a fascinating volume for students of child health.