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 round 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’ outnumbers greatly 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, tuberose 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 pseudohermaphroditism, Albright’s syndrome, premature breast development only and hepatoblastoma. What a wealth of material!

The author reminds one of Longfellow’s reaper:

‘With a 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 cortisone 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.


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 groupcd 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 sulfonamide derivatives are used in the treatment of bacterial infections’. Some of it is misplaced, for example, on treatment of acute poisoning by sulfonamides 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 sulfonamides unnecessarily’. Instructions like these in the section on sulfonamide 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 childhood. This is a fascinating volume for students of child health.