BOOK REVIEWS


This is an account of the successful struggle to organize a centre for spastic children in London, describing in considerable detail the planning and layout of this centre. As such it could be a helpful guide for the development of similar centres and will be read with interest by those associated with the care of spastic children. The nature of cerebral palsy and the work of the staff are explained in simple terms. The value of the staff reports and of the experience gained is as yet limited by the short time that the centre has been open.


A large volume has been needed to reproduce the many papers read at this congress which was attended by distinguished visitors from almost all the European and Mediterranean countries, and many from the Commonwealth and the U.S.A.

Dr. Thomas Hunt, as president of the British Society of Gastroenterology, presided, and addresses of welcome were given by Sir Harry Platt and the Minister of Health.

Part one is mainly devoted to benign conditions of the oesophagus and contains much of paediatric importance. Of particular interest is a contribution by J. Nauta of Leyden describing fundamental research into the nature of the closing mechanism between oesophagus and stomach. He demonstrates that the closure is valve-like in nature due to the oblique inlet, and to the support of the diaphragm and oblique muscle fibres in the stomach wall: the actual watertight closure is insured by a rosette of gastric mucosal folds of which he provides endoscopic photographs. There are a number of papers on neuromuscular abnormalities and on various aspects of hiatus hernia, with excellent radiographic reproductions. R. H. R. Belsey gives an account of 27 cases of oesophageal obstruction in childhood, occurring as a complication of chronic reflux oesophagitis, and implies that these cases are a frequent result of paediatric neglect: 'paediatricians are not yet sufficiently aware of the importance of reflux oesophagitis in infancy as a cause of vomiting...'. In fact, of course, reflux is an extremely common symptom, and its control an elementary detail in the technique of infant feeding. Oesophagitis and stricture formation is the exception rather than the rule whether a hernia is present or not. Even so, his case of advanced stenosis in which 'treatment for acidosis, cyclical vomiting, marasmus and anaemia, and hysteria having failed a barium examination was carried out for the first time aged 5', must make us more careful to investigate the regurgitating infant in whom there is any evidence of bleeding or dysphagia.

In the second part, consisting of short papers, there is an account of infantile cirrhosis of unknown aetiology from India by F. P. Antia and T. P. Bharadwaj and, also of special interest, a detailed account of the treatment of hepatic coma by dietary protein withdrawal and broad spectrum antibiotic therapy by Sheila Sherlock, W. H. J. Summerskill and A. M. Dawson. A review of work on coeliac disease is given by W. Sheldon who suggests that the role of gluten is sufficiently established to justify the use of the term gluten intolerance in preference to coeliac disease.

In part three ulcerative colitis is discussed in all its aspects. There is a discernible trend to early surgery while medical treatment of this strange illness remains so unsatisfactory, but a number of those contributing emphasize the psychosomatic aspect of the disease, and its probable origin in errors of emotional development in childhood.


Dr. Grob is to be congratulated on this splendid work, which apart from ear, nose and throat surgery, covers every aspect of paediatric surgery. The standard of the book throughout is so high that it is difficult to single out any section for special praise. The large section on chest surgery including cardiac surgery, and the beautifully illustrated chapters on abdominal and genito-urinary surgery are excellent, but perhaps the best chapters are the neurosurgical and orthopaedic ones. Dr. Grob is a distinguished plastic surgeon and he deals in masterly fashion with this speciality. The techniques and operations he describes are, however, largely unfamiliar to British and American surgeons.

In the preface the author hopes that the book will be of value to the paediatrician as well as to the paediatric surgeon. Perhaps the most interesting thing about this work is that the author is first and foremost a paediatrician and only incidentally a surgeon. The clinical descriptions of the various diseases and conditions aided by superb illustrations in black and white and in colour are outstanding.

The book is based on Dr. Grob's wide personal experience and as his practice varies in many ways from that generally adopted in the Anglo-Saxon countries, there is much that is interesting to the English speaking reader. Unfortunately there are hardly any references and it is not always clear whether Dr. Grob describes his own methods or those of other surgeons. The reader is often at a loss to decide who carried out all the original work, reference to which is made throughout. These remarks are not meant to detract from the value of Dr. Grob's original contributions to paediatric surgery, as for instance, his highly successful conservative treatment for exomphalos.

The book is most beautifully produced, paper, print and especially illustrations are all of very high quality. Unfortunately the price is extremely high.