BOOK REVIEWS


The preface of this book states that it is an 'alphabetical systematization of pediatric thought'. It is in three sections. The first lists under symptoms, signs or parts of the body, the problem which confronts the doctor. Each subsection is divided up into three arbitrary age groups: 'birth to age two weeks', 'two weeks to two years' and 'almost any age'. To take an example: under the heading—'Vomiting, two weeks to two years', 25 possible diagnoses are listed, one of which reads, 'Beginning at from birth to two or three weeks, increasing in frequency, violence and amount, with visible gastric peristaltic waves, olive pyloric tumour palpable when abdomen relaxed, malnutrition, dehydration, extreme hunger; Obstruction, alimentary tract, in stomach, at pylorus, by stenosis, hypertrophic, congenital' (italics in original). The next entry reads: 'With head retraction, dysphagia, dyspnoea, cyanosis, barking cough, hoarseness, wheezing: Obstruction, respiratory tract, in trachea, by thymus, hypertrophic'.

Having found the probable diagnosis, the reader may then search in Section 2 for further details of the condition. Each disease is described under three headings. The first is 'Rule out'. In the case of pyloric stenosis this includes a differential diagnosis of nine conditions. The second heading is 'Confirmation'. Here radiological and laboratory investigations are mentioned, followed by the clinical features. The third heading is 'Treatment'.

In Section 2 the information given about the various diseases is often very scanty and frequently misleading. Thus, while one of the classifications of cerebral palsy is given as: (1) spastic, (2) ataxic, (3) ataxic, tremorous, (5) aphonic (sic), the paragraph describing the condition makes no attempt to differentiate these types. 'Increase in reflexes' apparently occurs in all. The possibility of associated mental deficiency is not mentioned. When considering prematurity, we are asked to 'rule out small baby because of small or poorly attached placenta'. Under 'confirmation' the book states: 'All babies under 250 gm. (5 lb.) or 37 wks. or less gestation arbitrarily classified as premature.' This is not the usual teaching. Twenty-eight pages are devoted to the signs, symptoms and treatment of different types of poisons. This is probably the best feature of the book.

Section 3 contains miscellaneous data such as laboratory special tests. Under this heading only are described: the estimation of urine calcium by Sulikowitch's method, urine bilirubin by the use of Ehrlich's reagent, and the test for the detection in the stool of swallowed adult blood.

The preface states that the book should be useful to students, but it is clearly not accurate enough for them. A general practitioner confronted with an obscure case might possibly be reminded of a diagnosis which had previously eluded him.

Pediatric Index is a large book which has obviously cost the author much in time and effort. Unfortunately the result is so poor that the book cannot be recommended.


That the weather may influence disease is a supposition founded in folklore, but appearing to some to be akin to quackery. The scientific study of the problem is in its infancy. Dr. Menger has reviewed some of the literature, confining himself almost entirely to German and Swiss sources. (There is no mention, for instance, of the work of Sir Leonard Rogers, nor of the Khamsin.)

The variables in the weather (temperature, pressure, humidity, wind force) are difficult to study separately and to assess graphically. Moreover they are but measurements of the results of what is happening in the air. They do not in themselves constitute the weather. We speak of a depression when in fact it is merely a man-made measurement which is depressed. Menger prefers to deal with different types of air-mass, such as polar continental, cold maritime and continental tropical. He recorded them from hour to hour, and has devised a method of plotting them on a diagram like a compass dial. He noted the times of incidence of various diseases in the Mainz University Children's clinics and inserted these on the same diagram. He also studied the power of concentration in school children, infants' sleep and premature births. He concludes that sea air rather than polar continental is favourable to concentration, but promotes disturbances of sleep. (Mouriquand and Charpentier, two other authors whom he ignores, found quite a different effect.) Premature births were more common in warm moist air-streams, though cold fronts were also effective. Exacerbations of tuberculosis were noted in the spring (maritime tropical air). Haemorrhage in meningococcal disease seemed to depend on the weather rather than the severity of the infection, polar air being held responsible. Epidemic meningitis was also found to follow the influx of polar air.

On cyclical vomiting the author appears to be 20 years out of date as he considers it to be the result and not the cause of acetonemia. It follows the appearance of maritime tropical air. He has no sound explanation for these phenomena, and the criticism might be made that the exact hour at which a disease starts is very difficult to determine and may not coincide with the time at which the cause is active. Nor has he explored the possibility
of intermediary factors between the weather and the disease, as for instance the shutting of windows in cold weather, vitamin lack in early spring or river bathing in hot weather. Nevertheless this monograph is interesting and should be read by all who are exploring this attractive by-way of medicine.


In their introduction the authors say that theirs is the first exhaustive monograph on leukaemia in childhood since that of Willi in 1936. In tackling their subject they have followed the accepted handling of the condition, discussing the pathological anatomy, the clinical manifestations, the effect on particular organs, biochemistry and therapy. The section on the aetiology is, as might be expected, lamentably short. A noble attempt is made to reduce the enormous literature on leukaemia in children to some sort of order in that the various papers are grouped together in sections dealing with prognosis, leukaemia and infection and so forth. In a short monograph the authors have assembled a vast store of factual knowledge but they have found it difficult to say anything which everybody does not already know. As long as the book is used as a basis for further work it will serve a useful purpose and it will also have a place in the library of those seldom called upon to manage cases of leukaemia.


The authors of this interesting book take the now widely held view that medical care of physically handicapped children is essentially an educative process, leading the child to develop effectively the function he has. There is a basic need for the doctor’s socio-medical guidance and understanding when a child is defective, for a child is a member of a family which also needs help; the young patient cannot be treated as an isolated medical problem. The writers consider under three headings physical handicaps of children, (1) sensory, e.g. blindness, (2) motor, e.g. infantile palsies and epilepsies, (3) somatic, e.g. diabetes. Adjunctive measures, if used at all, should be subordinated to the general plan of habilitation, that is training for life. Many physically handicapped children are also mentally retarded and even those of good intelligence may become ‘retarded’ by deprivation of the educative processes of ordinary home life if they are segregated in institutions. Surprisingly, the authors give much information about institutions in France for the segregation of handicapped children and no practical suggestions for their education within the family circle; surprisingly, because these doctors have evidently made a profound study of the needs of children in their three groups and have laid stress on the educative nature of their medical care.


This is one more book about the trials and difficulties which beset children of both sexes on their hard road to adulthood. In clear language and the avoidance of technical mumbo jumbo Dr. Wilkes explains the ordinary facts of growth of the body and the development of sexual characteristics. Adolescent psychology and maturation into a grown-up are dealt with at length and with considerable sympathy.

It is possible that there is a public for this book in this country; but most parents who studied biology to G.C.E. level at school will already know most of the contents; perhaps the non-medical parent would appreciate a reference book where the difficulties of growing-up are dealt with authoritatively and yet understandingly, and to them this book can be recommended without cavil.


This fourth volume of the Ciba Colloquia on Ageing contains a great deal which is of interest to the paediatrician. The standard of the papers is extremely high and the discussion at the end of each contribution makes stimulating reading for those who have previously grappled with some of the problems which are considered.

The description by Fourman and Leeson of hypernatraemia and hyponatraemia in cerebral disturbances offers a rational explanation of many of the electrolyte disturbances which occur after brain injury or craniotomy. Thaysen’s study of the electrolyte secretion by the sweat and salivary glands provides some basic facts about the variables involved, though none of the participants was able to offer an explanation, for the dysfunction of the sweat glands in mucoviscidosis.

Perhaps the most important papers for the paediatrician are those on the effect of variable protein and mineral intake upon the body composition of the growing animal (Wallace, Weil and Taylor) and Widdowson and McCance’s exposition of the development of acid-base control in the infant and young animal. The first of these papers should be read by the medical advisers to all firms which produce proprietary milks, to help them to resist their own sales talk.

Talbot and Richie contribute an extremely thoughtful paper on the body’s tolerance for varying intakes of water and electrolytes, a matter of concern to all who review from time to time their schedules for the treatment of gastro-enteritis.

The content as a whole reflects great credit on the chairmanship of Professor McCance and the organizing and editorial abilities of Dr. Wolstenholme and his staff.

It is perhaps worth the attention of paediatricians that British medicine, though ably represented at this Colloquium, did not include a single practising paediat-