BOOK REVIEWS


This monograph presents a review of recent work on the aetiology of acute primary myocarditis.

In the first chapter the author discusses some of the clinical and pathological aspects of this form of acute interstitial myocarditis, frequently called Fiedler’s myocarditis, together with a discussion on points of differential diagnosis. In the second chapter the author discusses the viral aetiology at some length. Two main groups of viruses are associated with myocardial involvement—acute infectious fevers, mumps, influenza, acute respiratory disease, rubella, hepatitis and certain other viruses, herpes, vaccinia and poliomyelitis. The main substance of the monograph is devoted to an analysis of the rapidly accumulating evidence on the causal role of Coxsackie virus in acute primary myocarditis. This review shows that since Gear and others in South Africa reported on two epidemics of acute myocarditis in the newborn from which Coxsackie virus was isolated, similar reports have been received from many other areas of the world. There now seems little doubt that Coxsackie virus B, and in particular serological types B2, 3 and 4, play a definite role in the causation of this disease. Having worked with Dr. J. Enders, the author has recognized the need for careful laboratory investigations in research into conditions of this nature, and the monograph concludes with a useful summary of the material needed and tests to be undertaken in such investigations.

The monograph contains a lot of useful information in a compact volume of 148 pages. There is a comprehensive bibliography.


It is difficult to praise this book too highly. The three authors cover a field of medicine, our knowledge of which is in a stage of rapid advance. It is also a specialized and difficult field, comprising a number of somewhat rare or very rare diseases of which the aetiology in almost every instance is quite different. The chapter headings are formidable. They leave the reader in no doubt that here is no manual for the doctor looking for a guide to children’s diseases in everyday practice. A chapter on principles of genetics and the metabolic disorders is followed by those on conditions long recognized as disorders of internal metabolism and by others on conditions such as congenital hyperplasia of the adrenals less obviously included in the title.

The writing is admirably clear, concise and understandable. The language barrier need hardly cause any difficulty to anyone with the most elementary French vocabulary, such is the ability of the authors to make their subjects seem almost simple and to express their meanings in sentences which should be an example to writers in English.

Each subject is broken up into sections which fully cover the clinical, pathological and genetic aspects. There are many illustrations, histological, radiological and clinical of reasonably good quality.

It is refreshing to find, too, that either because of European interest in this field, or because the authors have taken the trouble to read the European literature, the references they give are very largely from this side of the Atlantic. Each chapter is very fully documented.

It is to be hoped that Professor Lamy’s book will find its way into most paediatric libraries.


The International Children’s Centre is to be commended for providing us with such a rich source of information on whooping cough. It is the report of an international seminar with representatives from 18 countries (although the participants were predominantly French), when the diagnostic, immunological and therapeutic aspects of pertussis were discussed. Much of the original work here reported has already seen the light of day in medical journals such as that of E. K. Anderson of Denmark and D. G. Evans of Great Britain, but there is a lot that is quite new. For the paediatrician and the specialist in infectious fevers the relatively small section on treatment should hold special interest. In spite of the many new treatments tried and the claims made for them, the cure for pertussis remains yet to be discovered. The clinical and laboratory research worker will find a great deal of current research work conveniently collected together in this volume. The lack of an index or a bibliographical list is to be regretted.

Healthier Babies—Happier Parents. By HENRY K. SILVER, C. HENRY KEMPE and RUTH S. KEMPE. (Pp. 244; illustrated. 8s. 6d.) London and Glasgow: Collins.

This book is so truly American that, though the publishers claim that it has been trimmed for the English market, nothing can disguise its origins. Equally divided into two parts, the first is a straightforward and comprehensive manual on child care which, it is claimed, ‘can be read with profit before the baby arrives and should be regularly referred to thereafter’: this claim is not idle. It could indeed profitably be read by nurses