BOOK REVIEWS


The care of the premature has come of age; and who is more fitted than Dr. Corner who has mothered so many of these infants into maturity to give us the first British textbook on the subject. For, with five parts, 38 chapters, 555 pages and four appendices and launched with a foreword by Professor A. V. Neale, her close colleague at Bristol, Dr. Corner’s book has, indeed, all the trappings of a full-scale textbook. The five main parts deal successively with the definition, incidence, cause and prevention; diagnosis; care; disorders; and prognosis. Part I covers the incidence, causation and prevention of prematurity and contains an interesting discussion on the difficulties in finding suitable measurements either in terms of duration of pregnancy or of the infant itself, with which to define prematurity difficulties which are particularly obvious in undeveloped countries where birth weights are low. Part II on diagnosis, consists of 10 chapters on the physiology of the foetus, and baby, and of the change over to extra-uterine existence in relation particularly to the immature infant.

Though Dr. Corner in her preface is almost hesitant over them, these chapters are, in fact, a real feature of the book and in them will be found, in highly condensed form, a summary of much of the present knowledge of the subject matter. Parts III, on care, and IV on disorders form the great bulk of the book. In them are described the general principles and the management of the well and ill premature infant, as well as the organization of premature care on a civic and a national scale.

Part V is a short section on the prognosis of prematurity, and the four appendices give details of medical procedures, nursing procedures, antibiotics in the premature infant and the composition of milks.

Dr. Corner’s style is gubernatrixial; that is, she is didactic and sure and economical in her writing, and her text is carefully paragraphed and also headed and subheaded in heavy type. It reads more like a synopsis than a textbook and everything is done to make assimilation easy. Yet it is, she admits in her preface, ‘written primarily for specialist paediatricians and obstetricians’ and indeed it is precisely what any paediatrician who runs a premature unit himself, or particularly who is setting out to build up paediatric services in a community, might like to have at his elbow as a book of reference and as ammunition to help him through committees. Dr. Corner has perfected a style which is extremely clear and easy to understand and she has, throughout her text, supported her own opinions and ideas by a great wealth of references. The result is a massive volume which is certain of immediate acceptance and of many fresh editions in the years to come.

Criticisms of so generous a book are perhaps churlish. There are certain sections which have no real relevance to prematurity, and English readers must continue to envy American textbooks particularly for the quality of paper and binding and for the profusion of appropriate photographs and illustrations. Here the paper and binding are cheap and illustrations, though of good quality, are desultory, as if picked up haphazardly to cheer the book up rather than as serious contributions to clarity and understanding. There is, for instance, the usual photograph of a mongol and of a mongol’s feet, of cleft palates and of manual expression of milk, and yet none of a host of interesting conditions which are not commonly seen and for which a photograph would clarify as nothing in the text could do. But these shortcomings are presumably related to costs of production and by standards of today this book at 105s. is good value.


If we follow Oscar Wilde’s advice and collect second editions we shall certainly include this one. It is addressed to parents but should be read and re-read by children’s nurses and health visitors and should not escape the notice of paediatricians and family doctors. Indeed the importance of this book lies in the fact that the everyday experiences and alarms of parents in bringing up children are not left to the easy advice of the magazine column but taken seriously by a professor of paediatrics who for many years had made a special study of child development. Since, however, most husbands leave such matters to their wives it was wise of him to include his own, and reading between the lines, their three children in the venture. The new chapter on ‘Holidays’ is excellent. The chapter on ‘The young child at school’ deals with too big a subject in too short a space and in a society where education is so important and causes so much parental concern a companion book for families with schoolchildren would be welcome. Perhaps before long Professor and Mrs. Illingworth will feel they have the knowledge and the experience to write it.

The photographs are a delight though some make the same point twice; the illustrations are a matter of taste,
I find their style too 'American', too near the cartoon for my liking, but it would be interesting to hear the views of a group of mothers who use the book.

The only real regret is that such a useful book has not yet come out as a 'paperback' at a cost within the reach of every family.


This latest edition of Professor Ellis's textbook appears only four years after the previous one, and is completely up to date. The work has not the size of the massive compilations more usual nowadays, but it has the advantage of being written by one man alone and so has a uniformity of outlook which makes for easy study. The book is written with immense erudition; the reader will find almost every pediatric symptom and syndrome mentioned, and there is an extensive index which makes reference simple. The print is big and clear, the illustrations are profuse, several in colour; and many of them are very striking. As befits its author, whose Chair is of Child Life and Health, the chapters on Social and Environmental Factors in Disease, Constitutional Factors in Disease, and Disorders of Growth and Development, are quite outstanding. Great stress is rightly laid on prenatal and neonatal paediatrics which takes up over one-third of the book.

Such defects as the book has, are the shadows of its virtues. Its format is large, and because of the good art paper used, it is heavy and uncomfortable to hold. So much has been crammed into a volume of medium size that many references are necessarily sketchy in the extreme—so much so that one wonders whether pruning might not have been advantageous. Professor Ellis is acutely aware of the immense variety, both in health and disease, shown by his young subjects, so that 'is likely to' and 'in most cases' have spoiled the sparkle of his style. His use of 'outwith' sent me to a (Scottish) dictionary: I do not know whether 'calorie' for 'Calorie' is a similar Edinburgh usage.

The book is extremely good value, and the student who masters it will have a complete framework in which to file his future experiences.


In this neat little monograph Dr. Apley deals with the problem of what he would like to have called 'little belly-achers' by applying, as best he can, the scientific method to the study of a loosely defined and certainly many-headed monster of a syndrome by objectively comparing his own material with control groups of children; he has managed to keep us informed and entertained. But he has achieved much more; for as, one by one, he matched each aspect of the syndrome against his controls, and tested various hypotheses of causation in the cold light of validity, he gradually abandoned his own bias towards 'organic causes (and organic cures) . . .' and has come to believe that, except for a very small proportion with frank organic disease, children with the periodic syndrome have emotional tension as a constant background, and that, for the most part, the pains are abolished or greatly relieved with the kind of informal psychology that can be applied in a pediatric clinic.

Amongst many other things Dr. Apley tells us that as against control groups those with the abdominal pain syndrome have other troubles like headaches, vomiting and travel sickness; that the E.E.G.s are normal in 74% of both groups and epileptiform slightly more often in those without than those with the syndrome; that drugs like phenobarbitone, sodium citrate, phenytoin, truxidine, oblivon as well as 'old-fashioned mixtures' might seem effective, but that their effects are variable, unpredictable and often transient; that less than 8% of his cases have any organic findings responsible for the condition and that one in 10 is considered to need referring to a psychiatric colleague for advice and treatment and that these are usually easy to recognize and always come from families showing evidence of marked anxiety states. All these and many other similar statements are backed up with appropriate figures.

Dr. Apley's style is dextrous and persuasive; those who find his conclusions difficult to subscribe to, or have picked up lazy ways with phenobarbitone and slick reassurance should first read this delightful and easy little book of 82 pages and then return, chastened, to out-patient clinics to find a new interest in an old and troublesome condition.


This pocket book covers the whole range of medicinal treatment during childhood excellently. It makes disconnected reading so it has been tried by use for three months in a child's department and has been found practical and reliable; one minor misprint and a few omissions of preparations used idiosyncratically by the reviewer, but no major faults, have turned up.

The introduction deals sensibly with dosage in children and is in itself worth publishing. The major part of the book deals with a formulary of preparations acting on allergy, on blood, on the cardiovascular system, etc. The list of medications includes proprietary preparations, and is interspersed with pithy warnings and guides to therapy, resembling but by no means copying, the Alternative Edition of the British National Formulary. This book is a marvel of industry as a compilation, but it bears an individual and critical stamp on almost every page, i.e. it is the composition of an author, not of an editor.

The mixture and the tablet are not the only considerations. There are sections on correction of fluid and electrolyte disturbances, poisons and antidotes, milk and milk products, as well as drugs used for the newborn and a Table of preoperative medication. Perhaps Gaubius' method and Young's rule for calculating doses might in future be omitted from the appendix, they might deceive the unwary into treating meningitis in...