BOOK REVIEWS


Every good paediatrician knows that he should be a child psychiatrist, but he also knows how far he falls short of this ideal. Here is a book that can help him. It can also help child psychiatrists to become good paediatricians, and it is the balance between these two aspects of clinical medicine that makes it an outstanding book. It does not set out to be a textbook of paediatrics, but rather to stress the need for a psychosomatic attitude to all paediatric problems. This comprehensive approach is needed, as the authors state in their preface, not only in ‘psychosomatic disorders’, but in all illness, whether common or rare, acute or chronic, trivial or lethal.

It is essentially a practical book which deals with a host of conditions commonly encountered in practice. The chapter headings remind one of any ordinary out-patient session: recurrent pain, recurrent pyrexia, enuresis, obesity, common handicaps are only a few.

It is unusual for a medical book to be written in such simple and delightful English. To read it to combine business with pleasure and it can be recommended to all whose work is concerned with sick children.


This book is the record of papers read at the Johns Hopkins Conference on Research Needs and Prospects in Dyslexia and Related Aphasic Disorders, held in Baltimore in November 1961. The authors include psychiatrists, neurologists, psychologists, a paediatrician, an otolaryngologist and two directors of remedial centres. In one paper the cases of dyslexia are divided into three major groupings:

1. Cases due to exogenous factors such as limited schooling, emotional blocking; these were diagnosed as ‘secondary reading retardation’.
2. Cases with clear-cut neurological deficits, diagnosed as ‘brain injury with reading retardation’.
3. Endogenous cases with ‘diminished ability to integrate the meaningfulness of written material’, diagnosed as ‘primary reading retardation’.

All the papers make it clear that it is the last two groupings that are under discussion. The authors have discussed the problem of dyslexia as it appears in their own spheres of interest.

The teachers’ observations of reversals, right-left confusion, transposition and omission of words are described. An account is given of a remedial programme in the Baltimore County Public Schools. A preliminary report on a survey into the incidence of the problem suggests that 17% of a school population are retarded in reading. A psychiatrist has emphasized that the case is rarely one of pure dyslexia, but that there are underlying visual and auditory defects and possibly body image confusion. Defects in form perception, directional sense and right-left discrimination are mentioned and the possibility of a fundamentally ill-defined cerebral dominance as a factor in some dyslexic children. The site of the lesion in brain-damaged cases is suggested from a study of adult cases. One paper describes an association of reading disability with mild choreiform movements of limbs and eyes due to brain damage following an early history suggesting cerebral injury.

This collection of papers has given an excellent representation of the whole problem and must be a reference book for anyone studying the subject.


Every new branch of medical science, as it grows, begets a series of new words, familiar to those who grow up with the science but strange and not readily tripping off the tongues of those preoccupied elsewhere; and on a rock of nomenclature the enthusiasm of many would-be learners often flounders. For example, the confusion over the Rh factor terminology just after the last World War had to be experienced at first-hand to be believed; and it was not until someone enunciated the basic fact that blood groups were different and could act as antigens that the mystique became less mysterious and the subject more easily understood.

In the last few years the science of human genetics has taken such strides forward that it warrants the respect due to a speciality in its own right. As such it has inevitably evolved its own terms and jargon. Dr. Cedric Carter has got to timely grips with this new subject and in Human Heredity he explains gently the science of genetics, not only to the layman but to the doctor who has not been able to keep abreast of its development. He deals