an adequate glossary is at times irritating. A fairly representative bibliography follows each chapter. The book is excellently produced, and is to be commended.


For those who wish to keep up with the ions this is an excellent review of the commoner electrolyte disturbances in infancy. The presentation is orthodox and the references quoted, with the exception of the work of McCance and Kerpel-Fronius, are taken almost exclusively from American and French sources—probably a just enough distribution of credit.

The section on renal physiology seems a little inadequate as there is no discussion of the counter-current mechanism, though a diagram from one of Ullrich’s papers is reproduced without comment in the text.

The structure of the book does not make for easy reading; there is much repetition and some of the most useful tables appear in the earlier chapters though they would be more useful in the sections on treatment. One has the impression that some of the material has not been properly digested, as on a number of occasions there are irritating changes from grams to milli-equivalents. Naturally one expects to find a different emphasis in a book from ‘the Continent’, but it is surprising to find that the authors apparently still depend upon venuupuncture for their blood samples for routine blood chemistry. The special description accorded to the somewhat heroic subclavicular route for transfusion seems unjustifiable, particularly as the authors admit that they have had no personal experience of the technique.

There are of course omissions: one would have liked for example a more detailed treatment of water intoxication and of hyperelectrolytaemia. Nevertheless, this is a book that can be recommended to anyone who has been able to overcome the linguistic inhibitions induced by an English schooling.


All who are interested in rheumatic fever, and particularly those who make dogmatic statements about its aetiology and management, should read this excellent book by May Wilson. It is a worthy successor to her former monograph which dealt with the period 1916 to 1940.

She discusses in a thoroughly scientific and detached manner the controversy about the aetiology, pathology, diagnosis, prevention and treatment of rheumatic fever. With regard to aetiology, she emphasizes the fact that it is certainly not due to the haemolytic streptococcus alone, but to an interaction of the streptococcus, malnutrition and poverty and unexplained genetically determined susceptibility to rheumatic fever, with stress (e.g. chilling or overfatigue) sometimes playing a part. She concludes: ‘It must be acknowledged that the pathogenesis of rheumatic fever is obscure.’

There is a very sensible discussion of the use of prophylactic antibiotics. She concludes that adequate antibiotic treatment of haemolytic streptococcal infections is obviously indicated, but suggests that continuous prophylactic antibiotic treatment should be reserved for those with recurrent tonsillitis or poor social circumstances.

As for treatment of the attack, the reviewer was pleased to see that the author comes down unequivocally on the side of giving corticosteroids. For instance she wrote, ‘our observations clearly demonstrated that in patients with progressive clinical symptoms of active carditis, adequate short-term therapy will terminate the inflammatory process, significantly shorten the duration, and prevent or minimize residual cardiac damage’. She is so convinced about the value of short-term corticosteroid therapy that she considers that a controlled study would be unethical.

She does not discuss another controversial matter, the duration of bed-rest, but one notes a passing remark that her children were ambulatory two to three weeks after the institution of corticosteroid therapy.

Dr. May Wilson deserves congratulations on an excellent and valuable book. It is brief, scientific, well written and to the point and it is easy to read.


This revised version of an old favourite should be useful to any expectant mother who wishes to know how to take care of herself during pregnancy, and how to prepare for the baby. It tells her clearly what is normal, what the likely complications are, when to consult her doctor and the reasons for antenatal examinations.

The advice on avoiding miscarriages in the first three months is not clear. It gives the impression that travelling by car is safe at this time, and does not warn against fatigue. The misleading impression is given that the onset of true labour pains is always accompanied by a ‘show’. There is some old-fashioned advice, such as that on laxatives and constipation, or baby clothes; and in the preparation of the room for a home confinement, washing down walls with carbolic solution is surely out of date.

The sections on the essentials of training for childbirth and on the feeding and care of the baby are excellent.