BOOK REVIEWS


A Hippocratic aphorism states: ‘Most diseases of children come to a crisis within 40 days, some within seven months, some within seven years, and others when they come to maturity; but those which shall continue longer, and neither be dissolved when they come to adolescence do continue so while they live.’ Has this any relevance to a statement in this new book that ‘permanent health problems arising out of toilet training lead Americans to spend many millions of dollars every year on laxatives, indigestion pills, colonic irrigations and other works of quack practitioners—and that psychogenic megacolon is one of the most severe disturbances in the health area’?

This book attempts to explain how the careful study of the healthy infant and child, coupled with skills and common sense in the daily care and management, may prevent or remedy the ‘well child’s problems’. It would be interesting to have a review of the book by an intelligent Victorian or Edwardian mother who reared her 10 children to the maximum of their health and abilities: she would have concurred with much that Dr. Jensen has written, with frequent side remarks such as ‘of course’ and ‘I could have told you so’. However, we now have a book of nearly 300 pages to relate the story. It is interesting and light reading and, no doubt, the sales of the book will be all the greater because it could interest doctors, psychiatric social workers, educational psychologists, and social workers and, in some fashion, carries that sub-mystical phraseology that undoubtedly attracts the modern knowledge hunters among the lay public. So it adds one more American-generated emulsion of ‘know-how’ in trying to keep in with Nature’s plan for the welfare of mankind commencing on square one.

Although, scattered in historical literature, we find many startling examples of magnificent erudition in matters concerning growth, development, maturity, behaviour, mental health, and even on ‘difficult children’ it is now sometimes assumed that all our present knowledge stems from Arnold Gesell since about 1940. Undoubtedly, Gesell initiated new attitudes in the study of well children and set good patterns for future developmental research. From this Jensen has taken his main lead and followed up with a good clear account of the realities of the affairs of parents and their children. Any doctor who reads this book will advance his ideas on child health and will certainly be all the more capable of answering, by discussion, some of the startling questions that are only too likely to be brought forward by many inquiring parents in these enlightened days of paediatrics with a health slant.


‘The duty of the Doctor is to give explanation and advice.’ Sir James Spence never tired of emphasizing the importance of this, and it is largely with this precept in mind that Dr. Crook has written this book. It is aimed at aiding the doctor in giving explanations and advice to parents on many problems concerned with children and also to give the busy paediatrician time by suggesting mimeographed sheets and other literature that can be given to parents to read for themselves.

The book is divided into two parts: (1) The problem and a method of solving it, and (2) materials and sources. Part 1 will not be of much interest to doctors in this country unless they have ready access to the many American publications quoted, it also is largely a reflection of one man’s concept of ‘Office’ paediatric practice in the U.S.A. Part 2 on the other hand contains a bag of more varied interest. Much of it consists of short explanatory leaflets dealing with common problems in children and many of these are excellent, containing sound advice that would accord largely with that given in this country.

The final series of short articles on allergy would not all find ready acceptance over here, but some of the points raised would merit further consideration.

British parents have not seemed so keen on health education as Americans in the past, but this is becoming less true now and with suitable British orientation many of these advice leaflets could fulfil a need.

In short, rather a unusual book not without humour and in parts stimulating, worth at least a second look.


The author of this monograph is already known for a description of the pathological anatomy of slipped upper femoral epiphysis, which he published in 1951. This account, supported by another example obtained at an operation for prosthetic replacement of the femoral head, reappears in the present work. The chapter on
pathology is illustrated with photomicrographs of the highest quality, and such a complete description must be almost unique in the world literature.

The author then describes his operative treatment of the condition. This consists of curettage of the epiphysis through a lateral approach similar to that employed in nailing operations. He quotes seven cases to show the effect of this procedure in producing early fusion across the epiphysial plate.

This operation is not one that has been adopted generally and one feels that a rather larger series of successful cases would be necessary before it could be recommended.

There is a chapter containing a review of current knowledge and opinion about this condition, and a very full bibliography.


More and more laboratory manuals of micro- and ultramicromethods in clinical chemistry are being published in response, as the editors write, to 'an ever-growing demand by pediatricians for these techniques in general hospitals'. Although probably the earliest one was published in the U.K., since then most have come from the United States where micro-procedures appear to have achieved a measure of acceptance not, so far, attained in hospital laboratories here, outside those of children's hospitals.

The editors of this book have succeeded in compiling an excellent compendium of methods, all in current use in the Children's Hospital in Denver. Originally intended for the residents and technicians of that institute, it is now offered to a wider public. A wide range of estimations of clinical interest to paediatricians is included, not only those commonly asked for, but many which are more rarely demanded. Hospital laboratories in the United States are, presumably, more liberally supplied with apparatus than those in this country, since estimations, e.g. osmotic pressure of plasma and urine, are given, which require expensive apparatus limited to only one procedure. Each method is clearly and precisely set down in numbered steps, making it simple to follow, and each is accompanied by brief notes of its clinical value and technical difficulties as well as the normal values. This last is especially useful, particularly for those not accustomed to evaluating the results in the young infant, and misleading interpretations may be given if it is not realized that normal levels can vary considerably according to age and birth weight, especially during the first weeks and months of life.

Within its scope, as defined by its authors, this text is a valuable one and can be recommended for the reliable and up-to-date methods included. However, alternative procedures are rarely given and references to the literature are relatively scanty. A few omissions may be noted: no method for the estimation of total lipids in serum or of oxalate in urine is given, and the estimation of uric acid in urine is described but not listed in the table of contents. Possible errors due to haemolysed specimens of blood seem to be nowhere discussed, although the method of collection of the capillary blood sample is given its proper importance.

Some may object to paper covers and the large format in a book intended for use in the laboratory, but the size and large print make it easy to consult on the bench.


Dr. Levin has succeeded in producing a collection of essays on infant feeding with an angle of approach quite different from that usually adopted by textbooks on the subject. His main aim is to show that today's practices are grounded in yesterday's prejudices. Evidence for this has been gleaned from a wide variety of sources ranging from Biblical quotations to Webster's Dictionary, together with numerous excerpts and ideas from writers down the centuries but, curiously, without any references or acknowledgements to them. In general he has ably developed his theme in a series of 14 essays on various aspects of the subject. The first, on breast-feeding, has interesting comments on the similarity between the placenta and the breast and also relates some of the folklore that surrounds the subject. Later essays deal with breast milk (its composition and limitations), wet nurses, bottles and teats, milk formulas (in which the author cannot resist giving details of his own!), stool gazing, weaning, wind and allied matters. While fully appreciative of the influence of the past, the author does not seem to have grasped the full significance of the chronology of historical events. Briefly, if bacteriology had been invented before the biochemical analysis of milk, instead of about one hundred years later, then the 'weak digestion' from which babies are reputed to suffer would have been rightly attributed to infections from contaminated milk rather than an inability to deal with fat, protein and carbohydrate that some still believe to be the case. Indeed, if they did not, there would then be no justification for writing a book such as this at all. Apart from this omission his handling of the subject is very competent though his style often gives the impression of hurried compilation and is sometimes frankly indigestible as when, on the first page, the phrase 'quadrupedal movement' is used to mean crawling. When complaining about the complex mathematical calculations once used in infant feeding the author (p. 63) refers to 'not so simple arithmetic', but whether this is a printer's error or a rather subtle pun the reviewer has been unable to decide. There are also inevitable inaccuracies such as the incidence of breast feeding in Britain at 3 months being under 20% (p. 16), and the weight of a yearling calf being 100 lb. (p. 28). The quality of the paper and reproduction is high, as also is the price. Anyone interested in the subject cannot fail to find something to enjoy in this book.