BOOK REVIEWS


The author in his preface states that this book 'is intended for medical students and general practitioners'. By convention this means a book that will be helpful for passing final examinations and little else. There is an index but no bibliography, it being assumed presumably that the student is not ready to use a library and that a general practitioner is too busy. Considerable name dropping throughout the text and comments about 'recent work' without references impress the reader that the author is familiar with new developments and original work without assisting the student to exercise his curiosity or critical faculties. More serious is the implication in works of this nature that clinical medicine is divorced from anatomy, physiology, and other basic sciences, and this book suffers from limiting its scope to clinical description and dogmatic teaching on therapy. Surely the first need of both medical student and practitioner is a sound appreciation of the general principles and philosophy of a speciality, and this requirement is scantily met by this book.

However it is perhaps more fair to compare Dr. Jolly's book with books that are similar in concept, size, and scope. His is clearly written, up to date, attractively presented, and on the whole the illustrations are well chosen to represent conditions difficult to describe in words. The common error of providing illustrations of only gross pathology is avoided, but it is a little difficult to understand why one of the precious colour plates was chosen to represent traumatic cyanosis when no cyanosis is visible, and the other shows 'mongolian blue spots', a condition that shows well in black and white.

It is easy to criticize short books because opinions are bound to differ as to what should be included and what omitted. Dr. Jolly has made life difficult for himself by including much material mainly relevant to underdeveloped countries. Thus congenital syphilis is given more space than enuresis, but in the description of gastroenteritis no mention is made of hypertonic dehydration. He has placed some conditions misleadingly, for instance lactose and sucrose intolerance are included in the chapter on mental retardation. General practitioners require practical advice, and it is pointless to stress the necessity for early diagnosis of deafness without indicating how hearing may be tested in the young child. The chapter on poisoning is inadequate and, except for ferrous sulphate poisoning, the value of emesis as the most practical and effective immediate general treatment is not mentioned. Dogmatism makes for effective teaching but is carried too far when the statement is twice made that the parents of a mongol child should not be told soon after birth but 'the fact should be slowly broken' (author's split infinitive) over a period of weeks or months. Many general practitioners and paediatricians regard this practice as deceitful and often unworkable, and are not convinced that 'a mental breakdown will be precipitated'.

Medical students look for scientific accuracy even in books written by clinicians. Is it true that 'excess vitamin K causes haemolysis and hyperbilirubinaemia', that 'sulphonamides increase the liability to hyperbilirubinaemia', or that respiratory acidosis can be corrected by bicarbonate therapy? Such slipshod biochemistry in a book of this type is likely to reinforce the too prevalent idea that paediatrics, when not pre-occupied with the trivial, is a form of clinical philately.


The appearance of a second edition of this excellent book is timely indeed since so much new knowledge has been gained in the past ten years concerning the physiology as well as the pathology of the foetus and newborn. The reader already familiar with the contents of the first edition will find much new information that the author has critically appraised and been able to incorporate within the format of the original book: this has been achieved, however, by a considerable expansion in volume, nearly all chapters being lengthened by as much as a half, a few having been doubled, and a new chapter entitled 'the blood constituents and adaptation to extra-uterine life', being added.

It is difficult to single out any individual chapter for special praise, although mention may be made of the section dealing with the pathology of the placenta; this was one of the best features of the first edition, and once again the high standard is maintained, the difficulties of interpretation by practising pathologists are squarely faced, and the concept of a 'placental reserve' seems to be a useful one. In the new chapter mentioned above the