Book Reviews


At first sight a book of over 200 pages on the physical examination of children, with only 18 illustrations, seems rather heavy reading. However, this work has reached its third edition in less than ten years, which, while indicating a good deal of hard work on the part of the author and a considerable number of readers, also pays tribute to the skill of Dr. L. A. Barnes in presenting a mass of descriptive detail in a surprisingly readable style.

There are chapters on each region of the body, on the examination of the newborn, and on physical measurements. All the familiar and many unfamiliar physical signs are described in detail, with examples of the diseases which may give rise to them. Since the readers of this book will mostly be those with the least experience in clinical paediatrics, it is questionable whether so many unfamiliar and unusual signs should be described at such length and in such detail. A section on developmental diagnosis ought to have been included, perhaps at the cost of omitting such items as the dark ring around the rectal mucosa in the early diagnosis of lead poisoning, or the to-and-fro motions of the head, synchronous with the pulse, in aortic insufficiency, a sign which enthusiasts for eponymous titles (but not lovers of the French romantic poets) will know as de Musset’s.

The one serious criticism of this book is its lack of adequate illustrations. There are 4 line drawings and 14 photographs, some of which, for example those illustrating percussion of the chest, palpation of the femoral pulse, and palpation of the skull, add little or nothing to the descriptions in the text. Surely the subject of physical diagnosis lends itself ideally to profuse photographic illustration. It could only have been a tyrannical publisher that prevented Dr. Barnes from including photographs of the Pierre-Robin, Treacher-Collins, de Lange, and Turner syndromes in the section on ‘Rare Syndromes with Characteristic Appearance’.

However, one cannot expect too much for 32 shillings these days, and it is reassuring to know that the students and house officers who read this book will appreciate to the full the importance of physical signs in the art of clinical medicine.


This book takes a hard look at present methods of child care, draws valid conclusions, and suggests vital reforms. These impinge on all branches of medicine and make it essential reading not only for the whole medical profession, but for its ancillary services and administrators as well.

The authors’ principal thesis is the promotion of preventive medicine. They stress the importance of a comprehensive approach to health, which should be instilled in medical students, general practitioners, paediatricians, and the public. They quite rightly regret the concentration on the less common organic diseases by teachers in medical schools.

At the end of some chapters with titles such as Preventive Attitudes, Education, The General Practitioner, The Paediatrician, Children’s Ward Or Children’s Hospital?, they suggest thought-provoking and valuable reforms. I would have preferred to have seen a final chapter in which all their proposals were assembled and, possibly, in order of priority.

For paediatricians there is a message in the foreword by Dr. Philip Evans when he states, ‘Paediatrics, but not every paediatrician, has moved out of the hospital’.

The authors are to be congratulated on their stimulating and progressive ideas which are put so succinctly. They conclude with the ‘Declaration of the Rights of the Child’ which could well have been headed by:

‘Nourish the sapling
And strong will grow the tree
What the child is, the man shall be’.


This book covers a good deal of the same ground as the recently published book by E. Saling, ‘Das Kind im Bereich der Geburtshilfe’, which was the subject of a review in the October 1966 issue of this journal. Like it, it marks the opening up of the new subject of foetal medicine. KUBLI, who works in Frankfurt, was one of the first obstetricians to incorporate Saling’s techniques into his practice, and the first three-quarters of the book, which is devoted to foetal asphyxia, is largely based upon the author’s observations, using these techniques. Anyone interested in this modern approach to monitoring the foetus before and during labour should certainly have this small book, which contains much information not available elsewhere, as, for instance, the useful section on the relation between foetal and maternal acidosis during labour.

The last quarter of the book deals with haemolytic disease of the newborn. The predictive value of liquor amnii examination is fully accepted and the relative merits of the different methods for interpreting measurements of bilirubin levels in liquor are discussed in detail.