Book Reviews


This is the 14th edition of the textbook of paediatrics, originally published in 1896 when it was edited by Emmett Holt, senior. It is virtually a new book, which has been edited by Henry Barnett, with 19 assistant editors and no less than 139 authors, almost all American; an impressive undertaking indeed. Inevitably it will be judged against Nelson’s Textbook of Pediatrics, the excellence of which has hitherto made it the standard text throughout the English-speaking world for the past decade or more. The new ‘Holt’ is some 10% longer (and heavier) than ‘Nelson’, but is otherwise of comparable format. Its strong suit is the particularly high standard of the basic physiological or biochemical background to the various sections, undoubtedly a most valuable feature. Here and there a subject is treated in perhaps too theoretical a manner, and the section on the physiology of dehydration seems an example of this, so that the tiro, faced with a decision of how to treat a dehydrated baby, might well be paralysed rather than guided by the complexity of the advice provided.

Most of the subjects which your reviewer sampled proved to be excellently and, occasionally, brilliantly done. It was hard to find anything to criticize, but surprising to note in the long diabetes section only the barest mention of the interesting temporary remission phase, which quite commonly follows the initial stabilization of diabetes, while the well-described syndrome of transient neonatal diabetes is not mentioned at all. The over-all impression is one of admiration for the paediatrics of a country capable of producing not one, but two such splendid textbooks.


Surgical and paediatric literature is more complete with the publication of Neonatal Surgery. This authoritative work from the Liverpool School will be welcomed by paediatricians and surgeons responsible for the diagnosis or treatment of infants in the first month of life. In writing this text the authors have succeeded in producing a standard reference for neonatal surgery as well as recording the unique experience of the Liverpool Regional Service since its inception in 1953.

This book is clearly written and is easy to read. It gives invaluable advice on the problems of the neonatal period and the care necessary for the newborn infant requiring operation. The presentation is clear, and throughout a remarkable degree of uniformity has been maintained, though the results section of the chapter on oesophageal atresia is omitted. It is liberally illustrated, and each chapter includes a list of references. This store of references—approaching 2000—is valuable, but sometimes the number of references appears more important than their precise accuracy.

In discussing meconium plug syndrome the authors do not appear to include 5 infants, initially diagnosed as meconium plug syndrome but subsequently proved to be Hirschsprung’s disease (p. 388). That 4 of these infants died is sufficient reason to stress the difficulties in diagnosis of these two conditions. One or two chapters tend to discuss the older infant, or therapy relevant to the older infant, e.g., dialysis, Wilms’ tumour, but the text is commendably restricted to the particular problems of the neonate.

These minor criticisms apart, the authors are to be congratulated on this outstanding book which merits detailed reading by all concerned with newborn infants.


The latest edition of Laboratory Manual of Pediatric Micro-biochemical Techniques is substantially different from the previous one. The paper cover is preserved to emphasize the authors’ intentions to provide a manual for laboratory use, but its previously large size and type have now been reduced to more convenient dimensions. This has allowed a large amount of new matter to be included, with little increase in the number of pages. The authors’ original intention was to provide from their own experience a compendium of micro- and ultramicro-methods, with full technical details. In this they have succeeded admirably. In the new edition, the aim has been more ambitious, and it is now beginning to be a textbook of chemical pathology. Thus the clinical and technical commentaries have been expanded, and useful sections on inborn errors of metabolism such as those involving amino acids, mucopolysaccharides, red cell enzymes, glycogen, and other carbohydrate diseases, as well as carbohydrate malabsorption have been included. Tests for endocrine function