

Book Reviews

Expanding Field of Infectious Disease

Infectious Diseases: Epidemiology and Clinical Practice. By A. B. Christie, M.A., M.D.(Aberd.), D.P.H., D.C.H. (Pp. 1047+viii; illustrated. 120s.) Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone. 1969.

For the past quarter of a century a fallacy has persisted in Britain, as distinct from America, that with the advent of modern chemotherapeutic agents all the major problems regarding infectious diseases have been solved. Indeed, many authorities still refuse to recognize that, while many of the great killing diseases have been shorn of their terrors, advances in microbiology and immunology, together with the opening up of the almost unlimited field of the viruses, have not only completely altered but also greatly expanded the range of infections which the physician in infectious diseases is now called upon to cover.

Dr. A. B. Christie is such a physician, and in his book *Infectious Diseases: Epidemiology and Clinical Practice* he has amply demonstrated the futility of imagining that infection is a thing of the past or that the new problems which have arisen can be easily solved. Indeed, so varied and complex are they that it is obvious the future specialist in infectious diseases will, like his predecessors, be compelled to devote himself whole-time to the study and practice of his art. Dr. Christie states that he has tried to write down what he has learned, and the size of the book, 1,000 pages, is adequate testimony to the prodigious extent of his learning. Equipped with a complete mastery of English prose writing, Dr. Christie succeeds in presenting masses of facts and reasoned argu-

ments with a simplicity of exposition that many would envy yet strive in vain to emulate. Thus, even after reading six pages of discussion regarding the pathogenesis of the Waterhouse-Friderichsen syndrome, one is left with a perfectly clear understanding of the varied viewpoints and conclusions. Very deep thought has gone into the presentation of his subject, and Dr. Christie has completely broken with tradition in the arrangement of his chapters following the dictates of his own very logical mind in setting down the known facts regarding each infection. These do not follow an accepted order, but are presented in a natural sequence which has all the continuity of a well-told story, thus succeeding, where so many writers in scientific subjects fail, in holding the attention of the reader throughout.

The introduction of each chapter is rendered fascinating by a discussion of the etymology of the name of the disease, and to one who finds the lack of a liberal education in literature and the classics a depressing feature of the modern scientific age this is both refreshing and stimulating. To give but one example, while many will know that the French name for anthrax is *charbon*, how many would recognize this as the possible origin of the name of a little hamlet in Greece called Carbonaria (a name that is certainly not Greek in origin), where anthrax is common. The presentation of all the

known information on the cultural characteristics and properties of the many viruses is extremely well done and up to date, while the clinical descriptions are aptly and compellingly illustrated by cases culled from the author's vast experience of infectious diseases and their epidemiological background.

In a book so comprehensive it is a little disappointing to find no mention of that excellent preparation Sulphatriad, which provides the ideal solution to the problem encountered in choosing between sulphadiazine, which, though therapeutically the most active of the sulphonamides in common use, is hampered by its tendency to cause crystaluria, and sulphadimidine, which, though free from this disadvantage, is a less potent agent. In conditions such as acute meningococcal infection, where heavy initial dosage is required, Sulphatriad is both an effective and eminently safe drug. One would have thought too that, in view of the many infections that may be accompanied by a rubelliform rash difficult to distinguish from true rubella on clinical grounds, greater emphasis should be laid on the importance of laboratory confirmation of diagnosis before a termination of pregnancy is mooted, let alone undertaken. These, however, are but minor reflections on a work that is outstanding for its completeness, originality of presentation, and scholarship.

The author states, "A good book should be opened with expectation and closed with profit." Dr. Christie may rest assured that all who read this product of his labour and industry will find their expectations fully rewarded.

A. MELVIN RAMSAY.

Growing Up under Difficulties

Children Under Stress. By Sula Wolff. (Pp. 248+xiii. 42s.) London: Allen Lane. The Penguin Press. 1969.

I think there was, or still is, a notice on the Albert bridge instructing troops to break step when crossing. This is no condemnation of the designer, but a simple recognition of the fact that a physical structure if stressed by a certain pattern of events in space and time has limits of tolerance beyond which lies catastrophe. So also with the developing brain and mind of the child. It needed the eloquence of Dickens to draw attention to the fate of children under the Poor Law system in the wake of the industrial revolution. Bowlby in our century rediscovered the problem, and suggested that child-rearing practices concerned with material needs might be inadequate to satisfy the emotional requirements of the child.

In her excellent review of the subject Sula Wolff points out how little we know about the effect of stress and deprivation on

the child. So much that has been written is based on unproved assumptions. The extent of validated knowledge is limited. Dr. Wolff emphasizes the lack of broadly based epidemiological studies. As she says, it is one thing to show that a certain proportion of patients attending a children's clinic have suffered from some particular environmental handicap—for example, illegitimacy or a broken home—but it would be much more informative to know how many illegitimate children need to attend a psychiatric clinic, and how many manage to get by without any great distortion of their personality.

Dr. Wolff's presentation is well balanced, informative, and eminently readable. Her book deals essentially with environmental stresses which might be avoided, modified, or the effects of which could be mitigated. She has a becoming modesty in regard to the role of the child psychiatrist, whom she sees as promoting and encouraging the efforts of many "other workers in this field, child care workers, health visitors, even family doctors . . ." (Is this last cut a little unkind or just realistic?)

BRIAN H. KIRMAN.

Adverse Effects of Drugs

Side Effects of Drugs. A Survey of Unwanted Effects of Drugs Reported in 1965-1967. Vol. VI. Edited by L. Meyler and A. Herxheimer. (Pp. 561+xi. 230s.) Amsterdam: Excerpta Medica. 1969.

Ill-health due to drugs—iatrogenesis, as it is called, or, more optimistically if a little ironically, diseases due to medical progress—has become a new dimension in the aetiology of disease. Perhaps some 5% of the beds in our general hospitals are occupied by patients suffering to a greater or less extent from our efforts to treat them. Yet the incidence of adverse reactions to drugs is not well known and even major reactions often go unrecognized. Indeed, one of the urgent tasks confronting us today is to put such reactions on a sound epidemiological basis. Thus their collection, tabulation, and analysis on a national and ultimately on an international scale are of great importance.

It is not surprising, therefore, that a plethora of books has appeared on the subject