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BOOK REVIEWS


The full title of this book is "Skin Diseases in General Practice—their Recognition and Treatment." The author has stated exactly what he intends to deal with, and he keeps faithfully to these limits, with the result that in a book of modest size he is able to deal very fully with the urgent problems of diagnosis and treatment of the commoner skin diseases. Few practitioners will regret the omission of details of histopathology, or long discussions on the supposed aetiology of skin diseases whose origin remains unsettled. All users of the book will welcome the frank remarks and healthy scepticism found throughout a work which is obviously written almost entirely from first-hand experience.

In his efforts to give the practitioner a clue to the diagnosis of a skin eruption, Dr. Davis has arranged the major part of his book on topographical lines. Thus, in the case of a patient presenting lesions on the hands, one turns to the chapter headed "Diseases with Lesions Localised Principally to the Hands and Feet." A list of the skin diseases likely to occur here, heads the chapter, and this alone will usually give a valuable hint. The chapter itself contains detailed information on the common skin diseases of the hands and feet, brief notes on the rarer diseases of that region, and a cross reference only, to generalised affections fully discussed elsewhere. It is surprising how little repetition is required, and the stressing of differential diagnosis is a great advantage from the general practitioner's point of view. Quite a large number of skin diseases lend themselves readily to such grouping, and even though the method is an unscientific one, the fact remains that while so many skin diseases remain of unknown origin, we cannot afford to neglect the help given by a consideration of the topography of skin eruptions.

The chapter headed "The Face," contains, in addition to descriptions of skin lesions, some interesting and useful remarks on cosmetics, a subject which is carefully avoided by most text-books on dermatology, in spite of the fact that practically every woman uses at least one "beauty preparation" daily.

In all, there are six chapters devoted to special areas presenting an eruption. The remaining nine chapters of the book are written on more orthodox lines, but still with a view to aiding in the task of diagnosis, as in the case of the sections on bullous eruptions and on anomalies of pigmentation. Again, treatment is given in a clear and concise fashion, and is based on the author's own methods, and observations. Drastic methods are for the most part carefully avoided, and internal treatment is not advised unless there is some clear
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indication for it in the patient’s general condition, or where experience has definitely shown that treatment by mouth or by injection are helpful.

It is a pity that the photography and coloured plates are not on the same high level of achievement as the text. In a moderately-priced text-book, it is too much to expect a profusion of perfect plates in colour, but let us hope that improvements in technique and lowered production costs will soon bring to every dermatological text-book the enormous advantage of really good illustrations in colour photography.

On p. 291, line 32, the last word should be “suspension,” not “suspicion.”

The book ends with nearly forty pages on electrotherapy, X-rays, radium, and the use of carbon dioxide “snow,” in skin diseases. Practitioners will welcome the practical details given, if they have occasion to treat many patients with skin diseases.

Altogether this is a thoroughly practical book, with a wise choice of the things that really matter in dermatology, and the ruthless exclusion of vague theories and potentially dangerous remedies. The book will be enjoyed by those who are dissatisfied with “toxæmia” and “allergy” as the origin of skin diseases of obscure aetiology.

B. L.


It is five years since the last edition of this well-known book was published. The advances made in dermatology since that time have necessitated considerable revision in the contents of the newly published fourth edition. This task has been admirably accomplished by the son of the late author, who has succeeded in bringing the book thoroughly up to date, without disturbing the well-tried and trusted framework of the earlier editions. In particular, a large number of new and successful therapeutic methods make a welcome appearance in the text. The addition of relevant quotations from recent literature and research in dermatology, makes the subject-matter still more interesting and helpful than before. An increase of fifty pages and twenty more illustrations has been required, but the book still remains of handy size, and the price is unchanged and extremely low for such a sumptuously produced and illustrated volume.

There are two excellent introductory chapters, giving some general principles, the assimilation of which will go a long way to ease the path of the beginner in dermatology. Then follow seven chapters which give ample information on the skin diseases due to infection by bacteria, spirochaetes, fungi and filter-passing viruses. The details of treatment are given with admirable clearness, and the lack of redundant or complicated formulae greatly simplifies the task of