BOOK REVIEWS

THE EARLY TREATMENT OF NERVOUS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

W. Lindesay Neustatter


The value of this book cannot be doubted, crystallizing as it does in its 379 pages an immense amount of practical diagnostic and therapeutic advice. But that it will be thus appreciated by one section for whom it is designed, the general practitioner must rest on a less firm foundation. Specialist knowledge dealing with finer points of diagnostic or therapeutic technique cannot, so to speak, either in this field or elsewhere, “jump the claims of” future generations. It is an error to think otherwise, though it may be done with the very best of intentions. The stream of knowledge is no more an exception to the law of nature than its physical counterpart and coming as it does from many springs must broaden and slow before reaching its ultima thule—in this case the practitioner. The specialist in a particular branch must, after all, remain the one who is trained to recognize the earliest stages in the particular disease. It is difficult to see how the process could be easily reversed.

It is a pleasure to note in this agreeably written book, whose title might suggest that it is devoted solely to treatment, that a considerable section deals with early diagnosis. This is an advantage to the reader who might otherwise tend to obtain a lop-sided view of the author’s intentions.

Of particular importance is the chapter on “Social and Economic Factors in Disease,” in which this Cinderella of medicine is for once taken out of her corner. It is emphasized that until this vast field is explored and some effort made to change such factors a vast breeding ground for disease remains.

One word of criticism. Perhaps too much space is devoted to psychotherapeutic technique, as the reviewer feels that ample literature already exists for those embarking on such troubled seas and that so daring a mariner would hardly limit himself even to precious space devoted to the subject in this small book.
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