BOOK REVIEW

Ankylosing Spondylitis : A Practical Guide to its Diagnosis and Treatment. Part I by F. Hernaman-Johnson, M.D., F.F.R., D.M.R.E. Part II by W. Alexander Law, O.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.S. 1949. London : Butterworth. Pp. 200. Illustrated. Price 25s.

It is to be regretted that Dr. Hernaman-Johnson did not live to see the publication of this book, which is the outcome of his wide experience in the diagnosis and treatment of ankylosing spondylitis. The authors state in the preface that their aim has been to present a practical guide, not lacking in details, to the treatment of the disease in all its stages, and in this they have achieved success. To the general practitioner it will be of great assistance, and it may help him to make a correct diagnosis at a stage when the disease can be arrested, and not when serious damage has already been done.

The importance of the pre-spondylitic stage is stressed, the early symptoms are described, and the value of x-ray examination in all cases of vague and often intermittent rheumatic pain is made clear. Aetiology and pathology are fully discussed, and the clinical description of the disease in its various stages is clear and vivid and illustrated by excellent radiographs. The method of treatment by means of x radiation is very fully dealt with, and Dr. Hernaman-Johnson's long practical experience of radiotherapy makes this section of special value ; it will be read with profit not only by the family doctor, who sees the disease in its earliest stages, but also by those who have had more extensive experience in its management.

The author deals fully with other methods of treatment and, though Dr. Hernaman-Johnson's views on the value of vaccines and gold in spondylitis are not shared by many others, they deserve careful consideration. The reviewer recalls the observation of an eminent rheumatologist that, though he had little confidence in vaccines as a specific treatment in rheumatic diseases, he used them as a means of keeping the patient under close observation. If vaccines are used in the way described in this book they can do no harm, and good is not unlikely to result even if specific action is unlikely. Drugs receive due consideration, together with practical advice on physical methods of treatment, and their importance are fully described by both authors.

The second part of the book, by Mr. Alexander Law, describes the surgical treatment in detail and is a valuable contribution to the subject, which is as yet in its infancy but which nevertheless has been brought to a high degree of technical skill based on the work of Smith-Petersen of Boston, U.S.A. The operative measures for the treatment of spinal deformity are described in detail, with admirable illustrations, and the advice given on after-treatment and physiotherapy in general will be read with profit by all who have to treat these distressing cases.

The book is excellently produced, and the illustrations are of high quality. It is a valuable contribution to the literature of the disease and deserves wide circulation. It is only to be regretted that Dr. Hernaman-Johnson will no longer be able to add to our knowledge of the treatment of spondylitis and of kindred subjects.

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