Buchbesprechungen – Book Reviews – Livres nouveaux


The present volume appears as the first part of a hand book planned to include five volumes in all. The editor of this impressive project is the director of the University Institute of Human Genetics in Göttingen, Professor P. E. Becker. The introductory chapter is a general section on the pathology of the prenatal period with special reference to the mechanism of developmental disturbances (by Goerttler, Kiel). This is followed by sections on anomalies of growth and stature (Lenz, Ham burg), hereditary diseases of the skeleton (Cocchi, Zurich), congenital malformations of the extremities (Grebe, Frankenberg/Eder), congenital anomalies of the teeth, mouth and jaws (Schulze, Göttingen), and, finally, on malformations of the skull, chest, pelvis, shoulder-girdle and spine (Degenhardt, Frankfurt/M.). The different topics are very thoroughly treated, and the comprehensive surveys of the literature are sober, critical and well-balanced. The list of references given after each section approaches completeness. The book contains a vast number of illustrations, mostly of a very high standard; this applies especially to the numerous roentgenograms. The get-up of the book, which is written entirely in German, is in accordance with the usual style of German handbooks. The general impression of this volume is that it is doubtful if it could possibly have been done better. Becker’s handbook will certainly take its place as the standard work on human genetics in those regions where the German language is read and understood. The present volume, dealing with congenital malformations, is valuable not only to human geneticists, but also to specialists in other medical fields, especially paediatrics, roentgenology, orthopaedy and obstetrics. Bent Harvald, Copenhagen


This volume contains a number of papers of great interest to human geneticists: the one having most general attraction is undoubtedly the account given by Race and Sanger on the work done so far with the Xg blood group system, mainly on the linkage relations of the loci on the X chromosome. The evidence brought forward is based on the examination of about seven thousand members of families with sex-linked abnormalities. Although the authors describe the results as rather thin, they are still of tremendous value and interest; the paper ends with a rather pessimistic outlook: we may have had relatively bad luck as it seems most probable that the Xg locus is near the end of the chromosome, which would indeed be a regrettable fact, but much new knowledge about this chromosome is still to be expected from the continued work with this unique system. – A paper on erythropoietic porphyrias (by Heilmeyer, Germany) should also be mentioned as it adds much to the clarification of this complex group of anomalies. – Dane’s
survey of the hereditary non-spherocytic haemolytic anaemias brings a new and improved classification, based on the many recent advances in this field. Quite a few of the remaining papers are also of value to medical geneticists, i. a. Dameshek’s account of recent studies in auto-immunity. Practically all the papers are in English. Mogens Hauge, Copenhagen


This monograph is naturally of primary importance to paediatricians as it gives a very complete survey of the literature as well as much new information obtained through the author’s own studies on this very important disease. It may, however, also be of value to those who include genetic counselling among their activities. The title of the book is somewhat misleading in so far as practically all aspects of toxoplasmosis are dealt with: epidemiology, prevalence, clinical picture, diagnosis and differential diagnosis, prophylactic measures and treatment; the main theme is, however, the one indicated by the title. The extent to which genetic counsellors may be confronted with possible cases of toxoplasmosis is illustrated by some of the results from this study: this disease was verified in about 15 per cent of children (below four years of age) with congenital cerebral disorders accompanied by such symptoms as hydrocephalus, microcephaly, tetraplegia or uncomplicated mental deficiency; about 50 per cent of prematurely born children with toxoplasmosis show signs of retino-pathy. Thus, a diagnosis of toxoplasmosis should be considered in counselling cases of these types with no obvious cause. If this diagnosis is established, it is of great value to know that so far no sure description of two or more children from the same family with congenital toxoplasmosis has been published.

Mogens Hauge, Copenhagen