

Book Reviews

PRACTICAL PAEDIATRICS

The Medical Care of Children. Edited by S. D. M. Court, M.D., F.R.C.P., D.C.H. (Pp. 294+xii; illustrated. 50s.) London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press. 1963.

Any contributions to paediatric literature from the disciples of James Spence in Newcastle are likely to be of practical value, to stress particularly the "home" side of the problems presented by the family, and to be of equal importance to paediatricians and family doctors alike. This is such a book. Well produced and well edited, easy and enjoyable to read, and full of valuable information on a variety of topics, it is worthy of a place in every practitioner's library and is a welcome addition to the reading of anyone having to care for infants and children in clinics, schools, and hospitals. Undergraduates too will benefit if they assimilate the spirit of its paediatric philosophy and realize that it is not intended to replace a textbook.

The substance of the book consists in a selection of paediatric problems encountered in the home, hospital, out-patients' department, or welfare clinic, and in how these problems may be tackled. There are 172 well-chosen case histories that provide instructive and entertaining thumb-nail sketches, and 36 excellent illustrations. At the end of each chapter is a brief list of suitable selected reading, and five helpful appendices are provided.

First editions inevitably incur some minor criticisms. The section on inborn errors of metabolism is limited to a brief and sketchy account of galactosaemia, and there is no mention of phenylketonuria and other metabolic disorders in which early diagnosis and prompt treatment may appreciably affect mental development. The value of chromatography and chromosome studies and when to use them might well have been mentioned here. However, on the credit side, one of the appendices gives the addresses of the various institutions where genetic counselling is available to family doctors. In a few instances a little rearrangement would be worth while—for example, vitamin K is recommended on p. 19 for the treatment of haemorrhagic disease of the newborn, but the risks of overdosage are not mentioned until p. 261. Congenital malformations are covered in four lines on p. 41, but the teratogenic effects of antenatal drug therapy are not mentioned till p. 261 and are then not sufficiently stressed. These criticisms do not detract from the value of the book as a whole, with its freshness of approach, its humanitarianism, and the spirit of co-operation (so evident in Newcastle) which is the keystone of success in a subject with the wide sphere of paediatrics.

WILFRID GAISFORD.

INTERNATIONAL VIEW OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

Epidemiology. Reports on Research and Teaching, 1962. Edited by J. Pemberton. (Pp. 341+xviii. 55s.) London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press. 1963.

This volume brings together a selection of the papers read at the Third Scientific Conference of the International Epidemiological Association held at Korčula, Yugoslavia, in 1961. In the preface the co-ordinating editor, Professor J. Pemberton, defines epidemiology as the study of the laws governing the distribution of disease in the community, and the thirty-five contributions from many countries fit into such a definition. They are grouped under the headings of cancer; diarrhoeal diseases; arterial pressure; occupational

diseases and accidents; neurological disease, anaemia, and nephropathy; standardization of diagnostic techniques; health services; and some recent developments in the teaching of social medicine.

Many of the contributions are reviews of well-known work by authors who have made the major contribution to the particular subject, but they are well chosen, carefully written, and very welcome as authoritative sources for reference. Into this category fall, for example, articles on the epidemiology of cancer, on arterial pressure, and on diagnostic standardization. Other articles report specific investigations that are not known, or at least less well known, outside the countries where the work was done. There are too many for all to be noted, but the articles on endemic nephropathy in Yugoslavia, on byssinosis in Egypt, and on experimental teaching of social medicine in India and Chile are of great interest.

What is, in effect, a symposium on diarrhoeal diseases brings together experience from Yugoslavia and Israel with that of Great Britain. The British side of the picture is contributed by Professor Robert Cruickshank, who has done so much to help epidemiological study of these diseases in many countries. He contributes two masterly papers written with his usual clarity.

This volume reflects much credit on the international group who started these meetings. It will be widely read as a book of reference and should be in the library of every health department. The shade of William Farr would be delighted to read such a volume.

A. C. STEVENSON.

MENTAL RETARDATION

The Biology of Mental Defect. By L. S. Penrose. Third edition. (Pp. 374+xxiii; illustrated. 42s.) London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd. 1963.

During the past 30 years there has been a radical change in the public attitude to mental retardation, due in part to increased knowledge and a more scientific understanding of the problem. Much of the credit for this belongs to Professor Penrose. Before 1938 when his classical Colchester Survey was published the field had been wide open to speculation and there was a minimum of disciplined investigation or solid fact to support a mass of ill-formed theory.

Early enthusiasts for eugenics often had a very limited knowledge of the principles of genetics. This did not prevent them, however, from expressing very definite views that are often reflected in the earlier legislation and social attitudes. The following extract from the *Report of the Departmental Committee on Sterilisation (1934)*¹ typifies this earlier approach: "More than one Officer comments upon the inadequacy of the present laws. Even where there is a sufficiency of accommodation in Institutions, the parents frequently refuse to give their consent to the children being removed. In several cases this has been got over by charging the parents under Section 12 of the Children Act, 1908, and asking the Bench to impose a purely nominal sentence but depriving the parents, for a time at any rate, of the custody of their children."

In contrast to this advocacy of segregation is Penrose's view that "Civilised communities must learn to tolerate, to absorb and to employ the scholastically retarded and to pay more attention to their welfare." This view now has full official support in principle, though it needs more financial backing to make it effective in practice.

This new edition of Penrose's text draws upon much of the original material published in 1938, to which has been added the steady flow of information from his team at the