Book reviews

The Child and His Symptoms. A Comprehensive Approach. 3rd edition. By J. Apley, R. Mac Keith, and R. Meadow. (Pp. 302; illustrated + tables. £6.75, paperback.) Blackwell: Oxford. 1978.

This is the third edition of a paediatric classic which discusses emotional factors in the causation of common childhood disorders, the social and emotional effects of some disorders, and the relevance of interactions between children, parents, and doctors. The book has been strengthened by the advent of a third author, Roy Meadow, by updating some of the clinical examples (e.g. mitral stenosis due to rheumatic heart disease replaced by urinary tract infection with vesicoureteric reflux), and by a few other alterations and deletions. For example, the chapter on 'debility' has gone, leaving one wondering what 'debility' and being 'run down' were. Depression, perhaps?

Overall the changes from the 1968 edition are relatively small, and it is perhaps right to be sparing in the revision of a classic. The most successful chapters remain those dealing with the group of recurrent disorders of emotional origin—abdominal pains, headache, and limb pains, and with management problems such as sleep disorders. The least successful are those which deal too briefly to be of value with some specific disorders like cerebral palsy (1 page) and speech disorders (1 paragraph), and those where the original chapters have been overtaken by advances in physiological understanding or advances in treatment. The prime example of the latter is asthma, where the slightly rewritten section must now be regarded as a rather inadequate account of the management of this disorder. Finally, although the writing is always clear, concise, and direct (there can be very few paediatricians who have written and spoken so well as its two original authors and the one who joined them), it always seemed a pity that its tone was quite so didactic.

Ronnie Mac Keith's great contributions to paediatrics were to help establish developmental paediatrics and the care of handicapped children as subjects of major concern to paediatricians, and to teach paediatricians about the interaction of emotional factors and physical symptoms. This book epitomises the second of

these interests, and we should welcome a new edition which has been lightly revised but which contains many aphorisms and phrases which one can almost hear RCM saying.

R. J. ROBINSON

Disorders of the Respiratory Tract in Children. 3rd edition. Edited by E. L. Kendig and V. Chernick. (Pp. 1115; illustrated + tables. £32.50.) Holt-Saunders: Eastbourne. 1977.

In this new edition the format of Kendig's book has been much changed; it is now in a single volume and deals largely with lower respiratory tract problems. The volume on paediatric otolaryngology has been omitted, but a section on tonsils and adenoids and upper airway problems has been incorporated. The first 190 pages provide useful background information on respiratory physiology and pathology, on the simpler lung function tests, including analysis and flow-volume curves, and on radiology and other diagnostic and therapeutic techniques. This is followed by a surprisingly short section on intensive respiratory care. Over 100 pages are devoted to neonatal respiratory problems; this section contains a large volume of information but does not provide as much help in practical management as other textbooks.

The remainder of the book provides a comprehensive description of the clinical presentation, pathology, and management of the many diseases which affect the lower respiratory tract. I find this main bulk of the book a most useful reference source, usually backed up by an up-to-date bibliography.

This is a rather large and expensive book which all those caring for children with respiratory disease refer to from time to time. It does not make easy bedtime reading and I suspect only those with a large commitment to paediatric respiratory care will wish to purchase it for themselves.

A. D. MILNER

Muscle Disorders in Childhood. By V. Dubowitz. Major Problems in Clinical Pediatrics, Vol. 16. (Pp. 282; illustrated + tables. £15.00.) Holt-Saunders: Eastbourne. 1978.

This is a splendid book which illuminates

children's muscle disorders in the widest sense. There are two beautifully concise and lucid descriptions of the approach to diagnosis, first in the opening section dealing with muscle problems as a whole, and again in the chapter on the floppy infant syndrome. Other chapters deal with the following topics (the number of figures is given in brackets as a guide to the extent of coverage): muscular dystrophies (81), congenital myopathies (47), metabolic and endocrine myopathies (12), myotonic syndromes (20), disorders of the lower motor neurone—including of course the spinal muscular atrophies and peripheral neuropathies—(50), myasthenia gravis—with a list of drugs to be avoided (4), inflammatory myopathies (14), disorders with muscle contracture and joint rigidity (16), disorders of movement—including torsion dystonia, stiff man, spastic paraparesis and hysteria—(3), and finally a brief chapter summarising the respiratory, cardiac, intellectual, and orthopaedic problems that may arise. The reader will find a useful questionnaire for initial evaluation of a child with muscle disorder, and exactly how to do a muscle biopsy, in sufficient detail; not quite enough information is given to allow the novice to set out along the path of nerve conduction velocity measurement or EMG work. There is considerable emphasis on management, especially orthopaedic and psychological, but it would have been nice to add a small section on the running of a modern muscle clinic.

The book is profusely illustrated by clear clinical photographs, biopsies and diagrams. The total of numbered figures (282) is misleading because there are often as many as four illustrations to one figure, and I counted more than 400 photographs of patients. Detailed case histories are another of the book's welcome features. The references, from 1839 to 1977, exceed 800. The index is not comprehensive (so that by looking up, for example, scoliosis or talipes one only finds a small proportion of the causes), but this is really a book to be read and read by paediatricians and orthopaedic surgeons, and probably a book to keep on one's own shelf since the library copy will soon become worn.

J. B. P. STEPHENSON