BOOK REVIEWS

The Urology of Childhood. By T. TWISTINGTON HIGGINS,
D. INNES WILLIAMS and D. F. ELLISON NASH. (Pp.
286; 136 figures. 45s.) London: Butterworth and
Co. Ltd. 1951.

The publication of this book is an important event in
the development of surgical knowledge in this country.
The cases of which it treats form a small proportion of
the surgical ills affecting the population in general: their
pathology is often extremely difficult to unravel; their
treatment a matter of difficulty to decide. Yet among
them the surgeon may find some of the most rewarding
cases in the whole range of medicine: cases in which the
right interpretation of symptoms and the right treatment
has meant the avoidance of death or of a lifetime of
misery.

Here information is given which is not to be obtained
elsewhere, even at the cost of prolonged search through
medical periodicals. This information is the fruit of
many years of study, experience, and experiment upon
the immense mass of cases which pours into The Hospital
for Sick Children. There is a class of textbook excellent
for its primary purpose of enabling students to pass
examinations, in that all known methods of treatment are
described in it, yet almost useless for guidance in any
particular difficulty since there is no firm direction as to
which expedients will work and which will not. This
book is not of such a kind; it is confined solely to the
description of what the authors have reason to think
is the pathology of the conditions discussed and to the
methods of treatment which they have found successful;
together with accounts of particular cases illustrating
general principles. There is a welcome absence of the
vague oracular statement which so frequently in medical
writing conceals the absence of accurate knowledge and
clear thought.

An important point about this book is that it appears
capable of indefinite growth. Its authors combine the
authority of long experience with the fresh outlook of a
younger generation, which is as it should be in surgery:
and one can hope that editions will succeed each other
in which the same balance will be kept. In this way a
steadily accumulating but carefully sifted mass of knowl-
edge should always be available to those who are
interested. Its readers should include not only urological
specialists, but all who have to do with children, whether
as physicians, psychologists, or general practitioners.
The latter two classes will find one of their commoner
and more exasperating problems, that of enuresis, clearly
analysed, and principles for its treatment set out in a
most helpful way.

A criticism is that more detailed descriptions of
technique and instruments might be given. The
apparatus needed is so delicate and expensive, and the
manipulative skill required so great, that it is difficult
to avoid the conclusion that work of this kind should be
treated as is cerebral surgery, and concentrated in a few
special centres. Finally, in a work that treats of hypo-
spadias and hermaphroditism, it seems illogical to omit
to give guidance on a subject upon which most con-
tradictory teaching and practice is in vogue, that of
'undescended testicle'.

Clinical Pediatric Urology. By MEREDITH CAMPBELL.
(Pp. 1113; 543 figures. 90s.) London: W. B.
Saunders. 1951.

Dr. Meredith Campbell's numerous contributions to
the literature have already made us familiar with his
encyclopaedic knowledge of children's urology, and the
appearance of this book, epitomizing his long experience,
is an important event for those with a special interest in
this branch of surgery. His previous two-volume
monograph, Pediatric Urology, which appeared in 1937,
has been the standard work of reference on its subject:
the present work, although very much more than a new
dition, follows the same lines and is like its predecessor
an invaluable source of information regarding the rarer
disorders of the urinary tract. The incorporation of the
word 'clinical' in the title has not unfortunately involved
the rearrangement of the material along strictly clinical
lines, and the reader may well find it hard to discover
Dr. Campbell's opinion upon some of the simpler
issues. Even such a clear-cut clinical entity as the pelvic
hydronephrosis of childhood is discussed in no less than
five separate sections according to its exact cause, which
may be discoverable only at operation. Apart from the
chapter on urinary infections, which should be of
considerable interest to paediatricians, the book will be
chiefly of value to surgeons with urological experience.
There is a complete range of admirably reproduced
pyelograms illustrating every topic, good cystoscopic
drawings and an unusually full bibliography. Inevitably
there are points upon which other urologists will differ
from the author: many will doubt whether they have
frequently observed 'advanced prostatitis' resulting
from masturbation or whether meatotomy is invariably
required for meatal ulceration, and it seems unnecessary
to have included so much discussion of disorders which
are exceptionally rare in children yet familiar enough in
adult practice. These are of course minor points and in
no way affect the importance of the book as a con-
tribution to the literature of urology: both author and
publisher are to be congratulated on its production.

An Atlas of General Affections of the Skeleton. By
SIR THOMAS FAIRBANK. (Pp. 411. 55s.) Edinburgh:
E. and S. Livingstone. 1951.

The high standard of medical literature which was
expected to appear in Sir Thomas Fairbank's book is
now before us. No one can be otherwise than delighted
that our very distinguished orthopaedic surgeon has set
down his great practical knowledge of the general
affections of the skeleton. We shall be more than
grateful for this 'information gleaned from my collection
of records, a collection accumulated over a period of
many years’. Few are privileged to write so authoritatively on the clinical and pathological aspects of skeletal disease.

The introductory classification of the diseases considered is a revelation of clear thinking and logical arrangement. Sir Thomas has always shown special care in the proper use of words in the nomenclature of diseases in bones and his present list should be accepted as authoritatively correct.

The scheme of presentation adds to the delight of the book, and in nearly every sentence the reader gains something from the fund of personal wisdom displayed and the clinical ideas interpolated gently but persuasively. Not only the core of the subject matter is vividly in focus, but the variations in each particular instance are brought out in an absorbing relevance.

‘An Atlas of General Affections of the Skeleton’ will be immediately accepted as a classic in the medical writings of paediatrics. A very large part of the book is related to congenital developmental errors and to problems of nutrition and metabolism. Each chapter is appropriately planned to contain a general discussion on a particular abnormality followed by descriptions and radiological illustrations (and sometimes photographs of the patient) of personally studied cases. Thus the reader is never in doubt of the vast experience incorporated into the book. The historical notes, often serving to introduce the particular syndrome, give further point to the author’s sense of responsibility and thoroughness in making known the steps whereby the present status of knowledge has been reached. As an example of the easy power of description, Chapter 32 on renal osteo-dystrophy is recommended for study; all that is known in this extensive field is brought out by the plainest of language in no more than four pages.

The once common diseases, such as infantile rickets, are presented in a refreshingly new way, but by wise action the variety of rickets, e.g. resistant or continued rickets, and some other types of rickets which are relatively more frequently seen at the present time, are given appropriate emphasis both by word and precision in x-ray illustrations. Moreover, in many of the case histories and notes there is an abundance of therapeutic method and prognostic data. It might be fairly stated that Sir Thomas has actually written a series of chapters on the natural history of affections of the skeleton and he has not hesitated to mention, without irrelevance, suitable information on the biochemical findings and on the concurrent physiological derangements. Wherever aetiological factors are doubtful, a skilful discussion usually clears away any pre-existent fogging of ideas.

With commendable brevity the article on Fanconi’s syndrome reveals Sir Thomas’s great descriptive ability. It is to be noted that he has not necessarily become involved in some of the up-to-date biochemical complexities of renal tubular dysfunction, and it will be necessary to look elsewhere for these. Eosinophilic granuloma of bone is considered in close association with Hand-Schüller-Christian disease and Letterer-Siwe disease, and the radiographs on page 302 clearly show the great similarities in this group. Osseous manifestations in the lipoidoses are well presented. Spinal lesions in Gaucher’s disease are shown and some extremely interesting case records are included. Fluorosis and the osteosclerosis due to bismuth, lead and phosphorus receive adequate discussion. The skeleton in the endocrine disorders is a particularly interesting section of the book, and the chapters on pituitary, thyroid and gonadal relationships have a special paediatric interest. The important matter of bone involvement in congenital syphilis is comprehensively illustrated and the radiographs, though demonstrating a little of the common difficulty of reproduction in this particular condition, depict the variety of bone reactions so often helpful in the diagnosis. To throw it into comparative relief, the next chapter is concerned with a classical life history, in text and radiographs, of a case of infantile cortical hyperostosis which, as is usual, reached a favourable conclusion.

The index is another example of precision and completeness.


Dr. Edith Potter has a world-wide reputation as an authority on foetal and neonatal pathology, and this remarkable book is the product of an experience of many years and many thousands of necropsies. It is the work of an author who can draw on a vast store of personal observations and need depend little on secondhand information. An adequate bibliography is given at the end of each chapter, but the text is refreshingly free from references to other people’s work: it is very much a record of the author’s own experience.

A large proportion of the book is taken up by the description and illustration of malformations. This is done so thoroughly that there can be few developmental anomalies not mentioned, and the pictures provide a gallery of malformations the like of which has probably not been seen before. Errors of development bulk much larger in the book than in the actual practice of foetal and neonatal pathology, but the diseases and injuries that occur during this period of life, and various general aspects of the subject, are not neglected. There are chapters on anoxia, birth trauma, infections, tumours, prematurity, placental pathology and other subjects, as well as references to diseases of the various systems and organs in their appropriate chapters.

A few minor errors have crept in, e.g. the description of the pneumococcus as a Gram-negative diplococcus, and the use of the term ‘pyloric sphincter’ where the wall of the pyloric canal is meant. In megacolon, Auerbach’s plexus is deficient in the unhypertrophied distal segment, not in the hypertrophied portion as stated. The statement that subdural haemorrhage is uncommon is contrary to general experience, and there is some confusion about the source of subdural bleeding, which on p. 90 is said to be most commonly the middle meningeal artery and on p. 405 the middle cerebral artery—both surprising statements.

The publishers’ part in the production of the book is a great achievement. The type is clear and well-spaced;