**BOOK REVIEWS**

**Handbook of Pediatric Medical Emergencies, 2nd ed.** By ADOLPH G. DESANCTIS, with the collaboration of CHARLES VARGA and ten contributors. (Pp. 398; 73 figures. 46s.) London: Henry Kimpton. 1956.

Emergencies in children tend to be emergencies indeed, and with the increase of effective drugs, and of exact methods both of diagnosis and of controlling treatment, the need for a practical book on paediatric emergencies has increased. This book provides for that need admirably. It goes a little beyond the requirements of the emergency, but does not set out to be a complete textbook of paediatrics. It does, however, cover the whole field, from the point of view of the house physician, registrar, or general practitioner, rather than from that of the visiting paediatrician or surgeon.

The sections on water, electrolytes, diarrhoea and vomiting, etc., on which so much advance has been made, are most useful. In all sections there is a proper stressing of those clinical findings on which emergency diagnosis must be based, as opposed to the stress on laboratory investigations so often found in American textbooks. The details of dosage are full and simple.

Perhaps the best feature of the book is the section on paediatric procedure (vein puncture, paracentesis, oxygen therapy, marrow puncture, etc.), which is profusely illustrated and so made instantly and completely comprehensible. Being printed on highly-glazed paper, the book is heavy, and unless it is kept on the spot where emergencies are seen it is likely not to be there when wanted. But it could lie on the back seat of a car without inconvenience.

The sections on the treatment of poisoning is a little old-fashioned. Treatment by antidotes, although logically excellent, is in practice disappointing. Better results are given by the more general treatment started in this country by Dr. Marriott at the Middlesex, concentrating on the treatment of the very few processes by which poisoned patients die, and keeping them alive until they get the better of the poison. There is, however, an excellent appendix on the chemical nature of poisonous substances met with in the home and garden. It is always valuable to know with what one is dealing.

The emergencies dealt with are, for the most part, common to all countries and to all people, without any special American aspect. Such things as snake-bites are not so common in this country, and although details of treatment are superfluous it is perhaps comforting to appreciate that one is not likely to be bitten from behind by a black widow spider in the closet in this country.

Altogether this book deals thoroughly with a subject on which a book is welcome.


Dr. John Caffey's book has been the standard work of reference for all those interested in children's radiographs since its first appearance in 1945. The many excellent qualities of the book must largely explain the fact that it still has no real rival in the English language despite the great extensions of scope and knowledge of paediatric radiology there have been in the past decade.

The present edition is a worthwhile advance on its predecessor. A variety of new subjects has been included and many sections in the last edition have been enlarged. The text has been expanded by nearly 200 pages. It is easy to read and understand. The illustrations have been increased in number by 228. They are again of the highest quality. The book is heavy (6 lb. 8½ oz.) and the binding does not seem to be quite strong enough for such a load, particularly when the high cost is borne in mind.

Dr. Caffey is at his best when dealing with bone and the various sections devoted to normal or abnormal bone make up almost exactly half the book. The odd radiological appearances produced by normal anatomical variations and the importance of not confusing these with pathological changes are, once again, rightly stressed. It is to the sections on bone and its diseases that the experienced paediatric radiologist will still find he likes to refer. He will find less of practical value in the other sections though these are full of information for the student and the relatively inexperienced.

The comparative weakness of such sections as that on heart disease is due partly to the omission of the details of the special techniques on which paediatric radiology now depends so much. Dr. Caffey regards most of the techniques as beyond the scope of the book. This may be so, but the omission of practical details of how such techniques are performed and of how their results are interpreted together with a lack of detailed consideration of differential diagnosis leaves little of value to anyone with the responsibility of making a precise diagnosis in a difficult case.

It seems a pity that on one of the few occasions when there is a description of the technique of an investigation—encephalography—few of the practical details which make all the difference between success and failure are mentioned, and, in any event, the method described is completely out of date and would be best avoided by anyone undertaking this examination.

The few paragraphs on partial thoracic stomach are of
interest in showing some reconciliation of American and British views on this important subject but there is still a long way to go. Dr. Caffey regards chalasia as the principal cause of haematemesis in infants, whereas workers in this country doubt the existence of chalasia as an entity, but believe that children in whom this diagnosis is made have, in reality, a hiatus hernia.

Hirschsprung's disease is a term not used in the book, but the section on aganglionic megacolon is an adequate summary of present knowledge of this disease with one important exception. There is no mention of the necessity, if diagnosis is to be reliable, for carrying out the barium enema examination at a time when the child has not been having bowel wash-outs. Moreover, if this simple precaution is observed, a correct diagnosis of Hirschsprung's disease can nearly always be made with confidence in the first few days or weeks of life, although Dr. Caffey seems to think it is not possible to make the diagnosis radiologically during the neonatal period.

Criticisms can always be made of any medical textbook, particularly those of omission. Dr. Caffey's book contains a wealth of information clearly and pleasingly put forward. It must be one of the best standard works on any medical subject. It is most strongly recommended and should be available to all paediatricians and all radiologists.


This book is produced on good paper, has many very excellent illustrations, is well bound and has the additional advantage of an attractive paper cover. The information it contains is never inaccurate but is at times vague and at others obscure the scope and understanding of the generality of nurses; scientific terms are often inadequately defined, and the general description of many conditions bewildering. The illustrations, though well done, are for the most part chosen for rarity rather than teaching value. For instance, of the nine illustrations in the chapter on 'Disorders of the Alimentary Tract' one relates to a swallowed coin, two to oesophageal atresia, three to hiatus hernia and three to trichobezoar. It is doubtful whether nurses in training will find in this book adequate answers to their numerous questions on the medical aspects of their work.


The current controversy as to whether nurses should be taught more or less medicine has not yet been settled, but the nursing of children is so important that it would be contrary to the interests of the patients to neglect the fundamentals necessary to understand why the child is ill. These fundamentals are concisely and lucidly explained in this book, which has reached its 6th edition. As before, it is the work of a team of contributors from The Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, and represents the practice of that hospital.

The first third of the text describes nursing and general considerations: it includes chapters on the normal child, preventive medicine and care of the ill child at home. The rest of the book considers feeding and the diseases both medical and surgical affecting children.

The descriptions are clearly set out and although rare conditions are mentioned briefly, the emphasis is on the maladies most commonly encountered. The illustrations are well chosen, and the whole volume has been extensively revised, while new chapters have been added, bringing it up to date.

It maintains the high standard of previous editions, and can be recommended as the best text of its kind in this country.


This latest volume of Advances in Pediatrics contains the usual seven authoritative monographs written by people who have distinguished themselves in the field of which they write. The subjects are post-maturity by Stewart Clifford, the gamma globulins by Janeway and Gitlin, thyroid disorders by Reilly, familial dysautonomia by Conrad Riley, the use of fluoride compounds in the prevention of dental caries by Edward R. Schlesinger and David B. Ast, coagulation disorders in infancy and childhood by Schulman and Carl Smith—all these from the United States—and coeliac disease by the Dutch workers Weijers, Van De Kamer and Dicke. It will be seen at a glance that there is something here for every sort of paediatrician, indeed it might be said that everything in the volume is for every sort of paediatrician. The bones of their subjects are laid bare by the writers in a masterly fashion and with deceptive simplicity, so that those reading the book will have no excuse for not being thoroughly on top of at least seven paediatric subjects.

It would be difficult, and indeed invidious, to single out any one of these articles for especial comment; there is something for the clinician, the neurologist, the nutritionist, the biochemist, the endocrinologist, the haematologist and those interested in preventive dentistry and perinatal morbidity. What more could be gathered together in one so small volume?


This small book has been written by 16 contributors from the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and has been 'written with the occasional paediatric surgeon in mind'. The outline form adopted for ease of reference gives little pleasure to the reader. Ease of reference is not obtained by the inclusion of funnel chest, thyroglossal cysts and lateral cervical cysts and fistulae in the chapters headed 'abdominal'. It is surprising to find no reference to intestinal obstruction in the index and the occasional paediatric surgeon is expected to know the exact cause