

Lehrbuch der Chirurgie und Orthopaedie des Kindesalters.

Ed. A. OBERNIEDERMAYR. (3 vols. Pp. 375, 1087, 266; illustrated DM. 620.) Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1959.

This is by far the largest textbook on paediatric surgery written since the war. It consists of three volumes and more than 1,500 pages, but in spite of its size the book is not as complete as one would expect and some of the chapters are surprisingly small. The largest part of the work of a paediatric surgeon is undoubtedly abdominal surgery and it is, therefore, surprising that only 150 pages are devoted to this subject. The quality of the different chapters varies considerably. Those written by the editor and his paediatric surgical colleagues include accounts of most of the recent advances in this field and describe the personal experience of the writers. The same cannot be said of some of the other chapters written by 'General' and 'Specialist' surgeons. The section on plastic surgery by H. Gelbke is excellent and deserves special praise, but it is obvious that some of the authors have not had much experience with children and are inadequately informed of recent advances in paediatric surgery.

Professor Oberniedermayr has performed a gigantic task in editing this monumental textbook, which will be of value to surgeons and paediatricians alike. It is unfortunate that the high price of the book will prevent most people acquiring it.

Growth Diagnosis. By LEONA M. BAYER and NANCY BAYLEY. (Pp. 241. 80s.) Chicago: University Press, 1960.

The importance of assessing a child's growth progress and developmental status is now widely recognized amongst paediatricians not only in relation to endocrinopathies, chromosomal aberrations and mental retardation, but also in obese children, and children with education problems, operated cardiac conditions, poliomyelitis, spasticity and many other complaints. There exists no succinct guide, however, telling the busy clinician in relatively few words and charts just how to do this. The present book is a praiseworthy, though by no means entirely successful, effort to provide one. It is exceedingly well produced and less excessive in price than most books coming from the United States at present.

The first 68 pages are devoted to descriptions of methods for studying growth in the individual patient, and the next 144 to describing in detail the application of these methods to 22 children, of whom eight are healthy children, followed from birth to maturity in the Berkeley Longitudinal Growth Study, and 14 are children with gigantism, various sorts of dwarfism, pseudohermaphroditism, hypothyroidism, precocious puberty, obesity, castration and hypogonadism. The book is clearly not meant to tell the reader anything much about how a child grows, and has no discussion on growth and the influences of genetics, environment, secular trend and so forth; it is presumed, I imagine, that the reader will be acquainted with one of the texts on growth, or with the excellent chapters devoted to it in Nelson or Holt and MacIntosh.

The measurements advocated are height, weight, sitting height (greatly preferable to the use of span in

both authors' and reviewer's opinion), biacromial and bi-iliac diameters. The authors fail to mention the clinically indispensable measurement of subcutaneous fat with calipers, and give illustrations of a quite outdated instrument for measuring the two diameters. A technique of taking front, side and rear view body photographs is given, though the rear view pose adopted by the subject in their illustration has little to recommend it, and the opinion that 'box cameras are preferable' has a quaint Victorian ring. The Greulich-Pyle and Pyle-Hoerr atlases for bone maturity at wrist and knee are recommended and briefly introduced. An anthropometric chart is used in which the five measurements given above are plotted in terms of standard deviations away from the mean. This is incorrect for weight, since the skew in its distribution makes the standard deviations *not* correspond to the usual percentiles; in any case, percentile charts are easier to understand for all measurements. The tables used as the basis for mean values and standard deviations date from 1931 (the Gray-Ayres data) which, considering the great secular trend over the last fifty years, is surprising. Scales for rating secondary sex character appearance are given, but in boys no distinction is made between ratings for pubic hair and genitalia, though the two do not always exactly keep step with each other. There is a long section describing the authors' own excellent work on androgyny of build, and another giving Dr. Bayley's very useful tables for prediction of adult height from height and skeletal development during childhood. There are also, and interestingly, new standard charts of height and weight for age, from birth to maturity, in which a most praiseworthy effort is made at including information on the developmental as well as the chronological age of the child. Lines are given for the physically accelerated and retarded child as well as for the average; the difficulty would seem to be that one cannot distinguish on them a pathologically small child from a pathologically retarded one, as one can by plotting height on a conventional chart in terms first of chronological, then of skeletal, age.

The clinical material is of great interest, illustrated with excellent photographs, and followed for the most part over long periods of time. Despite the criticisms above, there is no question that these descriptions constitute the best published accounts to date, from the growth point of view, of cases with clinical growth disorders. This is indeed what anyone familiar with the authors' work and particularly with Dr. Bayley's many and deeply thought out papers on physical and mental growth would expect. It is the more pity that a rather critical review is unavoidable. A curious insularity seems to have settled over the Bay when the book was written; astonishingly, only four references appear to papers published outside America; one of these refers to Fröhlich's original paper of 1901; the other three to standard texts of over twenty-five years ago, all of which have been reissued since in later editions. The authors are certainly to be congratulated on essaying a very necessary task; the result, despite blemishes, which will doubtless be removed in the second edition, is well worth the attention of paediatricians.