BOOK REVIEWS


This book consists of papers and discussions at a two-day conference in 1962 in a Child Development Centre in New York. The speakers were psychologists, psychiatrists, and educationalists, and the topic was 'Development and Education'. The papers were those of Ausubel on 'Stages of Intellectual Development and their Implications for early Childhood Education'; Lili Peller on 'Language and Development'; Irving Sigel on 'Development Considerations of the Nursery School Experience'; and Jules Henry on 'Death Fear and Climax in Nursery School Play'.

The book is definitely more suitable for psychologists than it is for simple-minded paediatricians, who will find much of it difficult to understand. For instance, Ausubel, in a section entitled 'The concrete abstract dimension of cognitive development' wrote: 'The concrete abstract dimension of intellectual development may be divided into three qualitatively distinct developmental stages—the preoperational stage, the stage of concrete operations, and the stage of abstract operations.' 'This dependence upon concrete—empirical props obviously limits his (the elementary school pupil's) ability meaningfully to group and manipulate relationships between abstractions, since he can only acquire these understandings and perform those logical operations which do not go beyond the concrete and particularized representation of reality in his use of props.'

Mrs. Lili Peller's contribution is a psychoanalytical account of language development. Some ignorant paediatricians, like the writer, will find her explanations difficult to follow. She wrote 'Through the highly libidinized, incessant, and tremendously repetitive motor and sensory activity of the sadistic—anal phase, the child develops the image of his self and of his body functions. He creates the world of things anchored in space'. She goes on to say, 'A psychoanalytic symbol carries an intense affect, which originally belonged to a body part, a body function, a basic family relationship, or to facts of life and death. The shift of affect from the symbolized, e.g., urination to the symbol, e.g., water—is due to repression.' She declares that 'It is narcissism and the drive for mastery which accounts for all early play.'

Elsewhere in the book there is an interesting discussion on the age at which children can learn, and the question of whether they can learn anything that adults can. Ausubel contends that children cannot learn as much as adults, though they are at certain advantages over adults: the latter may have to unlearn things if they have been taught badly, they are more apt to have emotional blocks with respect to subjects, and 'there is a marked falling off of intellectual enthusiasm as one moves up the academic ladder'.

Psychologists and educationalists will find much of interest in this book.


The main core of this book consists of a report of an epidemiological survey of stuttering in schoolchildren. For the purposes of the survey a representative sample of stutterers and their mothers was matched with a group of controls. A comprehensive battery of questions and tests was put to each and the results both compared simply, and analysed statistically. In this way several factors which differentiated the stutterers from the control group emerged. These should prove of considerable practical value.

The scoring of stutterers was then examined separately to highlight intergroup differences. From this emerged four factors which the authors pinpointed as appearing singly or jointly in all but a small minority of cases studied.

The book is concluded with an account of an interesting but unfinished experiment conducted with 35 stutterers of all ages, into the inhibition of stuttering by the use of syllable-timed speech.

In addition to the main studies in the book, there are two smaller, but no less interesting sections, one reviewing concisely the existing literature on the subject and the other dealing with the genetics of stuttering.

This important book should be of value to all those who are interested in a methodical approach to the syndrome of stuttering. The authors themselves admit the value of a detailed observation of a limited number of cases, as a first stage in research. The next is essentially a formal attempt to validate the hypotheses so formed, and it is as a part of this stage that the work was carried out. The authors have succeeded in producing a clear, concise, and
readable report on their contribution to the present knowledge of the syndrome of stuttering.

**Biochemical Approaches to Mental Handicap in Children.**


This is the report of a third symposium held in the North of England on 'Neurometabolic disorders of childhood', containing the communications given at that meeting. Although the general standard was not as high as that achieved in Sheffield the previous year, several interesting papers were offered. A full description of the biochemical survey of mental handicap which is being carried out in Northern Ireland was given by Dr. Carson, and Dr. Brian Bower described the study undertaken in Birmingham of tryptophan metabolism in infantile spasms. The treatment of maple syrup urine disease in two patients was described by Mr. Ireland of Liverpool using a relatively inexpensive diet.

Then followed three papers reviewing in detail the published material on heterozygotes in neurometabolic disorders, the biochemical aspects of Down's disease, and the problems of infantile autism. Finally there was an interesting review of special diets in the treatment of biochemical disorders, followed by some personal observations by Dr. Margaret Wilson on the effect of varying vitamin intakes on growth in young rats, which emphasized the need for full well-balanced vitamin intake when special milks are prescribed for infants and growing children.

This book does not contain any new information concerning mental handicap in children, but it will be of assistance to students and paediatric residents who are anxious to acquaint themselves with recent work in this aspect of mental handicap.


This book contains the proceedings of a symposium held at the University of Groningen in February 1964. The four subjects considered are nutrition, water and electrolyte metabolism, respiratory problems, and temperature control.

Inevitably one must compare this volume with the previously published Ciba Foundation Symposium on Somatic Stability of the Newborn, and indeed there is considerable overlap particularly in the realms of renal function and temperature regulation. However, most of the material presented is from data on human infants and there is a fair balance between pure physiology and its application to clinical situations. The discussions following each section are helpful, and as a source of information the references should prove useful.

The nutrition section covers body composition before and after birth, nutritional problems in low birth weight infants, the effects of prolonged starvation in surgical patients, and neonatal hypoglycaemia. R. A. McCance reviews water and electrolyte metabolism, and there is an excellent account of some aspects of adrenocortical function in normal infants as well as those with congenital adrenal hyperplasia in the early months of life. A rational approach to the practical management of neonatal dehydration is also presented. In the respiratory section the changes taking place in the lung at birth are summarized and some of the factors influencing pulmonary blood flow are derived from an experimental point of view. The ever baffling problem of respiratory distress syndrome is presented from the standpoints of diagnosis, disordered respiratory function, and treatment with bicarbonate and THAM. The section on temperature control, which is perhaps the best, contains much information on chemical thermogenesis and the possible role of brown fat in its mediation; the importance of providing a suitable thermal environment for the premature is stressed once more.


The editor of this attractive volume has made an interesting and well-balanced selection of some of the paediatric publications that have appeared during the year ending September 1964. The coverage is wide and includes most subjects of general paediatric interest, though with some bias towards clinical problems rather than basic research. The extracts are, in the main, well written but in a few instances condensation of the original has led to some loss of clarity; something which is probably inevitable in this type of publication.

Although the abstractors remain anonymous many of the more important and controversial topics have attracted comments from the editor or from named contributors. Some of these critical evaluations are invaluable for they impart a sense of caution and balance which is occasionally lacking in the original articles. This practice, which over the years has given the Year Book series a character of its own, should be commended, since nowadays many medical journals are without correspondence columns and their contents are immune from criticism. An interesting and helpful improvement, perhaps, would be to allow the original authors to add their own remarks.

This book has a high standard of production with good clear print, acceptable illustrations, and diagrams and a useful author and subject index. It can be recommended for all those who wish to gain a broad view of recent paediatric literature, especially the busy doctor whose reading time is severely restricted.

**Tay-Sachs' Disease.** Edited by Bruno W. Volk. (Pp. viii + 158; illustrated. $5·75.) London and New York: Grune and Stratton. 1964.

When the National Tay-Sachs Association in New York encouraged the establishment of a small clinical unit to study this disease in detail they created an opportunity for an enthusiastic team of workers to make