Book reviews

THE POSTNATAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN CEREBRAL CORTEX Vol. VII. The Cortex of the Four-year Child. By J. LeRoy ConeIl. (Pp. 309; 98 plates. 120s.) Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. London: Oxford University Press. 1963. These volumes are well known to students of the brain. They have confirmed that at the time of full-term birth the human cerebral cortex has the maximum number of neurones it will ever have. This study, however, presents the increasing complexity and maturity of cells during the early months and years of life and provides a fantastic picture of progression which must be considered by all those who study the physiology of psychological development. This volume demonstrates substantial changes as compared to the brain at the age of 2 years and it is to be hoped that these important studies can be continued to include later ages.

W. RITCHIE RUSSELL

MODERN PROBLEMS IN PEDIATRICS Vol. 8, Bibliotheca Paediatrica, Fasc. 81. Seminar on the Prevention of Antenatal and Perinatal Cerebral Lesions, Paris 1961. Edited by A. Hottinger and H. Berger. (Pp. xii + 388; 74 figures, 41 tables. S.Fr./DM. 64.) Basel and New York: S. Karger AG. 1963. A comprehensive study of the cerebral palsy of infancy involves discussions between specialists and scientists of widely differing interests. This volume reports the papers presented at an important seminar held in Paris in 1961. It contains many authoritative contributions which should be studied by those interested in this difficult field.

CONVULSIVE DISORDERS IN CHILDREN By Haddow M. Keith. (Pp. vii + 311; 33 figures; 23 tables. 85s.) Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown & Co. London: J. & A. Churchill Ltd. 1963. This book is a useful practical guide to convulsive disorders in childhood. It is a valuable addition to Bridge's 'Epilepsy and convulsive disorders in children', for so long pre-eminent in this field. Both are clearly based on wide personal experience, and each carries to some extent the stamp of its place of origin, the Mayo Clinic in the present volume and the Boston Children's Hospital in the former.

In early chapters clinical classification and aetiology are considered. The dual role of constitutional and precipitating factors, both of which may play a varying part in the production of any one seizure, is recognized. The value of electroencephalography in the investigation of fits in children is assessed, and the limitations as well as the usefulness of the procedure is recognized. A large section is devoted to the ketogenic diet in treatment, which is a subtitle to the book. The practical difficulties are discussed and a number of sample diets given. There seems to be considerable evidence that, if effectively applied, this treatment produces large and prolonged benefit in over 40% of cases. This applies most to the 'idiopathic' group, but even in known symptomatic epilepsy it has its successes. The diet is very little used in this country, largely because of the difficulties of enforcing it. This further assessment of its usefulness based on facts and figures is welcome. It is on the whole largely in agreement with earlier findings. Other forms of treatment, including surgical, are also reviewed. The general management and supervision of the activities of children with seizures is an important part of the doctor's role. This is mentioned, but could be more fully treated with advantage. The hereditary aspect, which naturally causes special concern to most parents, is discussed; and the conclusion, with which most clinicians will agree, is that epilepsy is the additive effect of several genes rather than a genetic entity. Of course for the actual emergence of a given seizure special environmental factors may also be required. An adequate selection of references to the literature is given. They are sufficiently numerous to justify an author as well as a subject index. The book will be of special value to neurologists and paediatricians. Its price in this country is unhappily high.

PRACTICAL NEUROLOGY By W. B. Matthews. (Pp. vii + 256, 27s. 6d.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1963. Only the close friends of the author of this book know that behind a modest and sincere manner there lies an unusual ability, wit, and clarity of vision. Dr. Matthews is the neurologist to a large provincial community and he knows very well which are the problems that are of most practical importance. His presentation is quite brilliant and by the constant effervescence of a particularly appealing variety of humour he has produced a 'best-seller'. This is what medical student and general physicians should read about neurology, but even the sophisticated neurologist will scan these pages with relish and advantage.

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RESEARCH IN MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY Edited by the Research Committee of the Muscular Dystrophy Group. (Pp. 273; illustrated. 30s.) London: Pitman Medical Publishing Co. Ltd. 1963. In this volume are published the proceedings of the Second Symposium on Research in Muscular Dystrophy organized by the Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain and held in London in January 1963. The book is divided into four sections, devoted respectively to clinical and genetic, pathological, biochemical, and electrophysiological research. In each section there is an introductory paper given by an eminent authority and these are followed by original communications and by a full transcript of the discussion which followed. The volume contains much that is of interest, not only to the
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