BOOK REVIEWS

DEVELOPMENTAL DEFECTS AND SYNDROMES. M. A. Salmon and R. Lindenbaum. HM & M Publishers Ltd., Aylesbury, 1978. Pp. xiii+432. Price: £30·00.

Reports of monstrous births account for a very substantial part of medical literature of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the nineteenth century general medical literature grew at a faster pace, thus reducing the share of teratological literature, but some very important contributions appeared, such as those of E. and I. Geoffroy-St-Hilaire—father and son—in France and of J. W. Meckel the younger in Germany. The present century started auspiciously enough with J. W. Ballantyne's " Manual of Antenatal Pathology and Hygiene ", a summary of the author's own wide experience and reading which even today can be read with profit. Slightly later Schwalbe's " Morphologie der Missbildungen " began to be published—a comprehensive account of the whole field, with different authors for every chapter. Completion of this work was interrupted by two world wars and not achieved until the late 1950's when many of the chapters published earlier had become obsolete.

In the meantime interest in teratology had been stimulated by such disturbing events as the detection of the effects of rubella infection during pregnancy, the increase (real or apparent) in the frequency of malformations following World War II, discovery of karyotype anomalies and the thalidomide tragedy. A comprehensive yet not too voluminous text book was needed; to some extent this need has been satisfied by Warkany's remarkable book (1971). Thanks to a lifetime of study this author was able—single handed—to come nearer to a complete coverage of the field than anyone before him.

In these circumstances the publication of an easy-to-read, albeit less scholarly text and atlas on malformation syndromes must be welcome. Dr Salmon with the help of Dr Lindenbaum (should one refer to the " author " or " authors "?—this is only one of the ambiguities one encounters with this book) have collected a great many eponymous malformation syndromes and also numerous photographs to illustrate these. They have had to face the problem of classification and have apparently come to a compromise solution. The listing of various synonyms for each malformation syndrome is indeed very useful, but necessitates great care in compiling the index. Here it seems the author (or authors) have not been altogether successful.

Your reviewer has, in good faith, tried to consult this book about several less common malformations which he had recently encountered in the course of his work. He was unsuccessful in obtaining any information on Uhl's anomaly; the Dandy–Walker Syndrome, though listed in the index is only mentioned in passing (on two occasions) but not defined; Meckel's syndrome (Dysencephalia splanchno-cystica) is listed in the index, but looking up the page one finds a very brief reference only to Meckel's diverticulum! A search in the index for Ivemark's syndrome (Agenesis of spleen, situs inversus, cardio-vascular malformation) was also unsuccessful nor was " asplenia syndrome "—the term used by Ivemark in his original publication—found in the index. In the chapter on thalidomide there is a reference

to Wiedemann who in 1962 contributed to the early detection of the epidemic of malformations but the paper which is cited in this context deals with what later became known as Beckwith–Wiedemann syndrome, not with thalidomide. Prompted to look up Beckwith–Wiedemann syndrome I found an adequate description, yet such misleading features as the listing of cytomegaly (or karyomegaly, as some prefer to call this strange microscopic picture) under " viscero-megaly ", alongside hepato—and splenomegaly.

A chapter on achondrogenesis type I is followed by one on achondroplasia type II; the reader wonders whether the terms achondrogenesis and achondroplasia are interchangeable—a question which is left unanswered.

Potter's facies is equated with renal agenesis syndrome; in fact it is only one of its stigmata. Moreover, it occurs also when oligohydramnios is due to causes other than renal agenesis (Thomas and Smith, 1974, have suggested the term " oligohydramnios syndrome " for this very reason). A reference to the Argonauts (page 10) had better have been omitted—they were certainly not the party of Ulysses.

The quality of the illustrations is uneven: some are excellent, others do not clearly convey the essential features of the abnormality under discussion.

The mistakes to which I have drawn attention were found without any intent of " nit-picking " on the reviewer's part. The suspicion lingers that there may be many more which have not been detected. Admittedly, some of them (e.g., the one about the Argonauts) are not serious shortcomings in respect of the subject, but they are evidence of too hasty proof-reading and perhaps also of too hasty preparation. The reader's confidence in the author's competence and accuracy is bound to suffer.

It is regrettable that commendable efforts have resulted in a less than perfect presentation; one is left with hopes for a second, thoroughly revised edition.

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