Interns—From Students to Physicians

By EMILY MUMFORD. Pp. 298. A Commonwealth Fund Book. Harvard: University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1970. £4.00.

Apparently scientifically, but really mainly in the form of anecdotes, Professor Mumford gives us a picture of life among junior medical staff in two different American hospitals. These are not identified by name, but provide a contrast between different styles of work. On the one hand she tells us about a large teaching hospital; on the other a suburban institution without any university association. The life of the intern is described from the stage of choice of hospital through the introductory period as the job is started, to the development of attitudes fostered by the respective institutions. A lot of what she says seems very obvious and there is really no scientific assessment of the differences; we are treated to opinion, snatches of conversation and value judgments.

This book does not appear to add any important information and members of the medical profession will not find it very useful. Sociologists might think differently but, despite a large number of notes and references, they will not find very much meat. The book may be useful for British doctors planning to emigrate to the United States who would like to acquire some limited insight into methods of hospital practice in that country.

The Basis of Motor Control

By RAGNAR GRANIT. Pp. 276+70 of bibliography and index. London and New York: Academic Press, 1970. £5.00.

This is a difficult book. It is also an excellent and rewarding one: one which to say the least has fired the enthusiasm of the reviewer. No one will read this book through once. There will be those, bored by the physiology lectures of the 1950s which sounded like funerary orations to Sherrington and his works, who will be put off by the same precise, punctilious style (the difference between affect and effect being as important as that between afferent and efferent); but others will find a new dynamic dimension to Sherringtonian concepts and will read the book time and again.

The publishers naively present this monograph, borne of Professor Granit's brilliant contributions to classical physiology over some 20 years, suggesting that it will be 'of interest' to Neurophysiologists, Neurologists, Bio-engineers and Physiologists, and will 'have applications among' workers in orthopaedics and physiotherapy. For the clinician it should present a challenge to apply some of the exciting new physiological concepts to his own field of interest. The second half of the book, from Chapter VII onwards, should prove particularly stimulating. Special attention is devoted to the understanding of the central control and variability of tone, to the great importance of the intrafusal afferents from the

intercostals in the control of respirations, and to the eccentrically placed muscle spindles of the external ocular muscles involved in the saccadic eye movements which are basic to visual fixation by the human eye.

Advances in the knowledge of the organizational features of the motoneuron will have a special bearing upon the study of spasticity and the implications of the tonic vibration reflex and the pharmacodynamics of light barbiturate anaesthesia, curarization and sleep itself upon the interaction of the alpha and gamma systems are potentially of practical interest. Professor Granit writes that 'we possess, as it were, the prescription but not the directions of use'. It is up to the neurophysiologist, engaged in clinical work, to seek out these directions.

Child Life and Health

Edited by R. G. MITCHELL. Pp. 586, illustrated. London: J. and A. Churchill, 1970. £6.00.

This is a successor to *Child Health and Development* by Ellis. It is a Scottish production with most of its twenty contributors drawn from centres north of the Border. There are two major sections, the first mainly concerned with aspects of growth and includes sections on emotional, intellectual and behavioural development. Individual chapters are devoted to the genetic aspects of child health and development, pre-natal development and the problems of the newborn with separate sections on low birth weight, nutrition, and feeding and protection against specific infections. The second section is more concerned with what has become termed 'social paediatrics' in which heavy emphasis has been laid on the social services in relation to childhood. Individual chapters deal with the social influences on parents and their children, descriptions of the Health Services for infant, pre-school and school-age children, together with sections on vocational guidance, mental health in children. The book is completed with sections on children in conflict with the Law and, somewhat inappropriately, child health in the tropics. A synopsis of legislation pertaining to children is included as an Appendix.

The aim of the book is to complement existing text books of paediatrics but it is evidently appropriate for a much wider readership and will have much to interest students of community paediatrics and social work.

The book is well produced with a pleasing format and adequate references. However, much of the material in the first section duplicates that found in undergraduate text books, especially in the field of genetics and physical development, but perhaps this is inevitable in view of the wide potential readership. Nevertheless, there is much stimulating material to be found which will provide a view of childhood in relation to society which is not always readily available to the medical student. No doubt subsequent editions will develop the scope of this book and allow its objectives to be more clearly defined.