BOOK REVIEWS


Having unwrapped the parcel, the reviewer must admit to a groan as he contemplated what he thought was just another book on the 'welfare' infant. His fears were unfounded. It is true that there is a good deal of material on growth and development, infant feeding, vitamins, and so on, but they are all treated much more thoughtfully and with less evangelism than usual. The advantages of breast feeding are an article of faith with British paediatricians, and Professor Illingworth displays this well but with reason and humanity in place of bigotry, and finds space to include the few disadvantages. He is exceptionally well read, and one suspects occasionally that a reference has been included for completeness, because there is a card in an index, but in general this inclusive tendency leads only to a fair discussion of all major aspects of a subject. Some authors leave the reader to work out his own conclusions, but Professor Illingworth finally sums up his reading, modified by his experience, and tells you what he thinks.

Recent textbooks deal well with clear-cut diseases, but much of paediatrics is concerned with disturbances of behaviour and development. Psychiatry can claim some successes in the grosser abnormalities, but in considering minor disorders which are important to parents (such as insomnia or masturbation), one is accustomed to ignore the new volumes with their intact dust covers and go straight to the well-thumbed Still. Many paediatricians will probably now first pick up Illingworth's slim volume, flipping the pages over as they scan their page headings: accident prevention, keeping the child busy, toys and play, shyness, thumb sucking, breath-holding attacks, refusal of food, effect of hospital, discipline, favouritism, etc. This book fills a need.


For a considerable time rumours of a longitudinal growth study of children in Aberdeen have been periodically reaching the fastnesses of the South. Now, at last, come the documents; and they make up for the lateness of their appearance by their unsurpassed completeness. This book consists of the actual raw measurements of 66 boys and 60 girls taken at 3 days old, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 years. The measurements were all made by the late Professor Alexander Low, and the publication appears over the hands of Miss A. M. Clark, Mr. M. H. Quenonille and Professor R. D. Lockhart. We are most indebted to them, measurer and publishers alike, for, although one can never be sure of this sort of data without a little mathematical analysis, on the face of it these appear to be the best records of bodily growth from birth to 5 years yet published anywhere. Eight measurements of the head and face, and 13 of the body, are given; and there are no gaps in the data. A minor criticism is that stature and sitting height were taken with the child lying down from birth to 3 years (crown-heel and crown-rump lengths) but erect from 3 to 5. The result is that the increment from 3 to 4 is too low, the lying values for these measurements always being larger. This throws into relief one of the many difficulties of longitudinal studies, that of maintaining constancy of methods over long periods of time, or providing duplication over an adequate period if advances in technique simply cannot be denied.

Information on age of parents, pregnancy number, date of cutting first tooth, bottle or breast feeding, number of teeth at 1, 2 and 3 years and size of fontanelle is also given. The children were born between 1923 and 1927, so the records give us a picture of growth rate during the decade 1923-32. Unfortunately the social and economic background of the homes is not mentioned. Enthusiasts of the biometry of growth will find much in this data to extract, and it is to be hoped they will sharpen their calculators carefully, for Professor Low's patient, unspectacular and persistent labours deserve well of them.


This is a valuable collation of the published data on the yield and the protein, fat, sugar and minerals of human milk. It is made from the point of view of a laboratory milk chemist, and as no dairy industry has been founded with women as chief producers, most of this interesting information is not of immediate practical usefulness to clinicians.

The variations in milk composition between different healthy women and from time to time in individual women are well brought out. In practice we deal with a nursing couple and we assume, probably rightly, that the composition of the milk produced by the mother, although variable, is suitable for the infant and hence what matters is the volume. The various reports on milk yield are not well digested here, chiefly because it is not made clear that figures from test weighings are not comparable with figures from expression of milk by hand or by pump. The failure to notice Waller's work (e.g. Nursing Mirror, Jan. 15 and 22, Feb. 12 and 19, 1949;