receives only little attention even in the major textbooks of medicine. Dr. Schwarz who, during a period of 3 years, had the opportunity of studying 13 cases of this group of disorders at the Department of Endocrinology of the Medical Policlinic of the University of Heidelberg, proposes a unitarian aetiology for the two diseases. His hypothesis is that a hereditary defect in phosphate transport mechanism accounts for the pathogenesis of both diseases which he regards as variants of the same basic disturbance. His view is supported by a number of facts of which the most important is occurrence of pseudohypoparathyroidism as well as pseudo-pseudo-hypoparathyroidism, not only among members of the same family but even in the same sibship. Somewhat disappointing for the paediatrician is the scanty reference to the childhood manifestations of the diseases, though 57 of the 97 patients with pseudohypoparathyroidism were under 17 years of age. The youngest patient in the literature was an 18-month-old child. It is suggested that the predominance of this condition with its hypocalcaemia and hyperphosphataemia in the younger age-groups is largely due to the much more active mineral metabolism associated with skeletal growth, while pseudo-pseudohypoparathyroidism is more likely to be encountered in adults. Another aspect that is largely ignored is the oligophrenia which occurs in 65% of the cases. It seems that in spite of their mental retardation these patients are able to earn their own living when they reach maturity. No opinion is expressed on the relation of the mental backwardness to the postulated metabolic defect.

Anybody interested in pseudo- and pseudo-pseudohypoparathyroidism will find here all the information he may require in a pleasantly readable form, supported by excellent illustrations and 15 pages of references.


Eminent specialists who have contributed to the knowledge of the orthopaedic, genetic, biochemical, respiratory, and cardiac aspects of scoliosis discuss their problems and thereby present a more rounded view of this difficult subject. The four common aetiologies of scoliosis are given as congenital, idiopathic, paralytic, and secondary to neurofibromatosis. These factors overlap and considerable disagreement was soon found even on the definition of congenital (which I take to mean—present at birth).

The reader will have guidance, when presented with a 2-month-old baby lying in a curved spinal position, in distinguishing whether this is a simple postural curve, an ‘idiopathic’ congenital curve, or a curve with marked structural deformity. The idiopathic group is divided into infantile, juvenile, and adolescent, with varying sex incidence, curve direction, and prognosis.

Diseases of known genetic basis in which scoliosis may be a factor are clearly reviewed and classified on the basis of their mode of inheritance. Indications for conservative and surgical treatment are covered in a few pages, and the physician is not swamped with operation detail. The physician, indeed, will find much of interest in the articles on the pulmonary aspects of scoliosis, assessment of cardio-respiratory function, regional blood flow, lung vascularity, and diaphragmatic movements.

Progress of the lesion and the effects of treatment are assessed by the surgeons in terms of structural deformity and the cosmetic result, while the physicians use cardio-respiratory function as their guide.

Advances in the separation of various subgroups may be achieved by biochemical and chromosomal investigations.

In this small and easily read volume of 96 pages is a wealth of interest to all who are faced with the problem of scoliosis.


This monograph gives an up-to-date and detailed account of genetic testicular disorders. There is a full clinical account with emphasis on the anthropometric aspects of the syndrome, and a well-illustrated description of the testicular pathology. The genetic basis of the condition is discussed in greater detail, recording the varieties of chromosomal abnormalities and the theories put forward to explain their origin.

The bibliography is extensive, with references to 649 papers, and covers the world literature very fairly. The text is somewhat discursive, but gathers together a great deal of information. This is a valuable compilation of current knowledge on the subject and will be of use to all clinical endocrinologists, and to those who are interested in the development of the boy into manhood.


This is a further tome of the standard work on Paediatrics in German edited by H. Opitz and F. Schmid, the ‘Handbuch der Kinderheilkunde’. Its aim is again, as in preceding sections, to provide an up-to-date text and a reliable reference book which will keep its place in the German paediatric literature in years to come. 59 contributors have been entrusted with this task of whom all but 10 are German. 4 of the foreign authors are Hungarian, 2 Austrian, 3 Swiss, and 1 Swedish.

The plan of this volume is well thought out and

This vast (7 lb. (3515 g.)) tome deals with virtually every aspect of respiratory, cardiovascular, and genitourinary diseases in childhood. It covers not only the clinical aspects, but also embryology, physiology, virology, light and electron microscopy, the most sophisticated techniques of investigation and radiology—the lot. Nothing is too obvious, nothing too insignificant. Everything is included. The RS virus? Steroid provocation test in pyelonephritis? the sodium pump? vector ECG? all 11 fungus infections of the lung? Pco2 at birth? endomyocardial fibrosis and endocardial fibroelastosis?—it’s all there. The mind boggles at the amount of work that has gone into the book, and equally at the task the editors have set themselves.

Only one or two criticisms might be made. First, the relative neglect of perinatal paediatrics. For instance, the 229 pages dealing with diseases of the lung do not contain a clear-cut description of the Respiratory Distress Syndrome; surely a serious omission in view of the importance of the condition and the vast amount of research that has been and is being done on it. Secondly, the index, as so often in outsize works of this kind, is not really adequate.

But in the main, this is a splendid production. The book, like most of those bearing the Springer imprint, is beautifully produced on glossy paper, the reproductions are excellent, the graphs and tables awe-inspiring, the bibliography is up to date and international.

There remains just one nagging and prosaic point: who is going to buy these 9 volumes? The 4 which have appeared so far cost about £130 (DM. 1573). What happens when a vast compilation of this kind becomes out of date? This raises the whole concept of cost-effectiveness and its application to teaching methods. The editors themselves in their introduction refer to the constant stream of new discoveries and changes in therapy and diagnosis in paediatrics. Marvelous though this work undoubtedly is, one cannot help questioning the whole idea underlying such an enormous effort, foredoomed to obsolescence even at its inception.

Let us stick to our Anglo-Saxon practice of first filling our leaking tank of paediatric knowledge with a standard textbook, and then maintaining its fluid level by reading specialist journals.