consists of an excellent general part which includes the basic concepts of metabolism, a review of hereditary metabolic disorders with special attention to principles of protein metabolism and its disorders. Curiously the chapter on Eiweisstoffwechsel deals with disturbances of amino acids while that on disordered protein metabolism with hypoproteinaemias, dysproteinemias, antibody deficiency syndromes, and amyloidosis. Fat, carbohydrate, and lipid metabolism are treated in a similar manner; principles of physiology as applied to the growing human body are followed by a detailed account of diseases due to deranged function. Water, electrolytes, and minerals are not forgotten nor are the essentials of vitamin metabolism. The pages on trace elements contain a great deal of interesting information and your reviewer is certain that most paediatricians will be surprised by the fact that intravenous injections of yttrium and erbium may temporarily interfere with the clotting mechanism and that selenomethionine is a constituent of β-galactosidase. However, it is important to realize that trace metals may, in minute quantities as enzyme components, play a much bigger role in our lives than their present clinical obscurity indicates.

Useful in the section on nutrition is a discussion of the composition of common foodstuffs, and their deterioration under poor conditions of transport and storage. Special attention is, of course, paid to natural infant feeding. Breast milk banks find an enthusiastic advocate, and we are told that in the course of 4 decades 180,000 women provided 3,200,000 litres of human milk for deserving babies. But amazingly enough, the artificially fed baby is still served with the half or two-third liquid cows’ milk: water mixtures with additions of sugar, maize germ oil, rice water, etc., practices that have long been abandoned in this country in favour of reconstituted dried or evaporated milk products. This tradition-bound tendency also becomes evident in the discussion of gastro-intestinal disorders of infancy where one can still encounter the classification introduced by Adalbert Czerny and which was extremely useful in the earlier decades of this century. It needs a complete reformation and reinterpretation unless it be abandoned altogether.

The heavy hand of tradition leaves its imprint also on the discussion of problems of malnutrition, so much so that one wonders if present views on malabsorption will find a place therein. But they are there hidden baskfully in the shade of past greatness, such as ‘Milchnahrschaden’ and ‘Mehlnahrschaden’.

The special section of the volume—under the general title of digestion—contains anatomical and physiological introductions to each organ of the alimentary tract and detailed treatises on the relevant disorders of oral cavity, oesophagus, stomach, intestines, liver, and pancreas. These chapters present reliable but limited information in a somewhat pedestrian manner.

The first part of the book is much more impressive, probably because of the nature of its exciting content and its vast amount of information. The references after each chapter are up to date, helpful, and very clearly set out. The paper and print are of the highest quality as are most of the illustrations. The traditional coloured photographs of normal stools have not been forgotten.

A number of minor misprints have been encountered, though of no significance, they have no place in a book of this quality and price.

For individual paediatricians who can afford it, it is a worthwhile possession; for medical libraries a must.


This vast (7⅓ lb. (3515 g.)) tome deals with virtually every aspect of respiratory, cardiovascular, and genito-urinary 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 oversize 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. Marvellous 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.