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 worth-while possession; for medical libraries a must.


This vast (7½ 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? PCO, 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 What happens when a vast compilation of this kind becomes out of date?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. 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.