health are threatened by loss of the gastro-intestinal secretions, disease, injury, surgery, and shock. Chapters follow on diagnosis and treatment, and finally an excellent one on the disturbances and problems met with during infancy and childhood, illustrated by the results of intake and output measurements over the critical days or weeks.

The three short appendices help to prevent frustration and might have been given titles in the table of contents.

An excellent book for students, because it is so simple, for registrars and the like because it is so knowledgeable, and for surgeons because it is so practical.


Now that bovine tuberculosis has almost vanished and the human form is at least temporarily less common than before, most British surgeons seldom see patients with scoliosis. In most patients with scoliosis the condition is due to the 20% or so of those born with idiopathic spinal curvatures in whom the deformity has persisted. In about 75% to 80% of babies born with curved spines the curvature disappears without treatment or in spite of whatever treatment is given. This book is about those in whom the deformity not merely persists but is progressive. The cause is unknown, the patients are few, and the condition is resistant to treatment. This book is concerned mainly with the secondary effects of the gross deformities of the spine and ribs on respiratory and cardiac function and thus on the natural history of the disease. It is a remarkable example of co-operative effort by members of the staffs of the Royal National Orthopaedic and Brompton Hospitals and their associated Institutes of Orthopaedics and Diseases of the Chest, supported by several research foundations. It contains much of interest to a wide range of doctors written by experts in this disease and which cannot be collectively found in any other book. It seems a pity, however, that the editor and publishers of this stimulating and valuable book should have been content with such a poorly photographed example of such a poor piece of sculpture of the human figure supported by an almost Victorian piece of studio timber and a block under the left heel when they might have selected any one of a number of the glorious Greek examples perfectly poised and showing even more beautifully a postural scoliosis.


Looked at from the child's point of view, adoption has to do with unwanted children and their need for a home; but if one starts with adults wanting to adopt a child, it has to do with infertility and the need for children in a marriage; and this is the viewpoint of Mr. Humphrey's sociological study now published as a monograph in the series of Studies in Child Development.

In placing a child for adoption we obviously need to know the relevant considerations, of which we are at present largely ignorant; and new knowledge is therefore badly needed by those with such responsibility; but despite the recent spate of published work on the subject the important questions remain unanswered—sometimes because they have not been asked. It is important for a child unwanted by his natural parents that he should be adopted for his own sake rather than as an aid to fertility, a sop to conscience, or a way of keeping up with the Jones's; and Mr. Humphrey's data provide reassuring evidence on this point, which as a parent of adopted children himself he examines with scrupulous sensitivity. It is also to his credit that he looks critically at the shibboleths of the adoption societies—such as that the natural and adopting parents should never meet, and is prepared to see them modified in particular cases as knowledge and experience grow.

If his book is in some ways unsatisfactory and difficult to finish, it is because there may be no real half-way house between subjective studies of particular instances and sociological studies on a really large scale, his numbers being insufficient for the latter and his detail for the former. Workers in adoption will find it of some negative value in clearing their minds of myth and cant, while the general reader will reflect wryly on the fact that in the age of the population explosion it is apparently more socially acceptable to have unwanted babies than a sterile marriage.

The book is well written and well constructed, with a good index and useful set of references, but 25s. is a lot to make libraries pay for a slim volume with a paper cover whose interest will necessarily be ephemeral.

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**VII Middle-Eastern Mediterranean Paediatric Congress**

Under the auspices of the International Paediatric Association, the Iranian Society of Paediatrics, in collaboration with the Middle-Eastern Mediterranean Paediatric Society, is organizing in Tehran from 13–16 September 1970 the VII Middle-Eastern Mediterranean Paediatric Congress. Additional information can be obtained from Iranian Society of Paediatrics, P.O. Box 14/1761, Tehran, Iran.