NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN ELECTROMYOGRAPHY AND CLINICAL NEUROPHYSIOLOGY. Vols 1-3 Edited by J. E. Desmedt. (Pp. 2,094; illustrated; £76.20.) Karger: Basel. 1973.

These volumes represent a landmark in the development of electromyography. Starting as an adjunct of physical medicine, the techniques are now clearly established for the investigation of the neurophysiology of normal and diseased human subjects, with parallel studies in animals. The field is now so large that few workers now cover the whole subject. It is, therefore, valuable to have such a useful source of advanced material available in the laboratory. Professor Desmedt has based these volumes on some of the contributions to the Fourth International Congress of Electromyography held in Brussels in 1971 with further invited contributions from distinguished authors to complete a comprehensive survey of electromyography and related subjects. As with all such compilations, the standard is variable, and the critical discussions are omitted. Nonetheless, the volumes are very valuable for active workers. They are less useful for those requiring an entry to the field or a balanced survey giving due credit to work of the past and critical comment on current trends. The evanescence of many parts of the compilation make it unlikely that many will buy them for personal use. Comment about the cost of books is disappearing as money loses its value but the price of these volumes leaves the reviewer speechless.

J. A. SIMPSON

PRESENT LIMITS OF NEUROSURGERY Edited by I. Fusek and Z. Kunc. (Dfl. 120.00 (approx. £17).) Excerpta Medica: Amsterdam. 1972.

Despite the title this book represents the Proceedings of the Fourth European Congress of Neurosurgery, held in Prague in 1971. It contains 180 communications of varying length loosely grouped into sections on oncology, cerebrovascular disorders, stereotactic surgery, and trauma. In spite of the efforts of the editors there remains a fairly large miscellaneous section at the end of the book. The publication of conference proceedings in book form is now an established phenomenon, whatever book reviewers may feel about it. If properly handled, with emphasis on uniformity, brevity, and strict selection of papers and on promptness of publication, these books can serve a most useful purpose in presenting a lot of information on a main theme, well before it appears, scattered in many journals. Unfortunately, this book falls short of the ideal on many counts. The publication appeared 18 months after the conference, when six would have been desirable. The individual papers vary far too much in length, from 12 pages down to a single non-informative paragraph. The latter look

suspiciously like abstracts which have been included because the authors failed to provide a full manuscript. The indexing system is infuriating: it requires reference to three separate pages to locate each paper, and there is no single author or title index. The main criticism, however, is the implication from the title of the book that it is a definitive work describing the scope of modern neurosurgery. In such a context, many of the contributions, however admirable for paying the author's way to the congress, appear rather pedestrian. There is enough useful information in this volume to repay the browser who picks the book from the library shelf, but it can neither be recommended as a definitive book nor even a useful record of conference proceedings.

J. DOUGLAS MILLER

DICTIONARY OF EPILEPSY, Part I By H. Gastaut. (Pp. 75; £2.50.) WHO: Geneva. 1973.

The desirability of an agreed terminology in medicine and science requires no advocacy. In newly emerging subjects there is little problem but in a subject such as epilepsy with a literature extending back to the earliest medical literature before the era of rapid international communication the problems are formidable. Professor Gastaut and a panel of experts from 16 countries have prepared a dictionary of agreed terms with listing of terms considered obsolete or rejected for some reason.

Compilers of dictionaries and terminologies must expect criticism and often violent disagreement and few readers will be completely satisfied with this *Dictionary*. Nevertheless, the general approach is very good and the World Health Organization, its sponsors, invite comments and suggestions for future editions when the *Dictionary* has been tested by field use. Part II, which is in preparation, will be a multi-lingual index to Part I, giving the equivalent terms in the four different languages in which Part I will be published. The dictionary will then be an invaluable aid to international communication. Professor Gastaut and his team are to be congratulated for completing their task so acceptably.

J. A. SIMPSON

SYNOPTIC FUNCTIONAL NEUROANATOMY By Wendell J. S. Krieg. (Pp. 74; illustrated; \$6.00.) Brain Books: Evanston, Ill. 1973.

Professor Krieg is well known for his major textbooks of neuroanatomy. He now offers 'an ultimate synopsis of neuroanatomy'. Transparent colour-coded diagrams are used to build up a system of 'centres' and projections which are described in a short text. The latter is divided into three sections considered appropriate for (1) paramedical and

biology students, (2) medical students, and (3) advanced students requiring a 'quick refresher'.

The educational value to the student of constructing his own charts is undoubted. It is less certain whether those drawn by another artist are so useful. However, the book is cheap, attractive, easily handled, and a welcome attempt to simplify a difficult area of anatomical study.

J. A. SIMPSON

SPASTICITY—A TOPICAL SURVEY Edited by W. Birkmayer. (Pp. 218; illustrated; \$12.50.) Huber: Berne. 1972.

This book results from an international symposium in April 1971, sponsored by a drug company, presumably with the object of bringing together and publicizing the various and multiple assessments on the utility of one of their anti-spastic drugs.

However, the early chapters of this book are of more general interest. Their authors review the physiological and pathophysiological aspects of skeletal muscle tone, the regulation and function of the muscle spindle, the causes and clinical significance of spasticity, the pharmacological aspects of the supraspinal control of muscle tone, and the pharmacological differentiation of muscle relaxants. Two chapters deal with some aspects of the measurement or assessment of spasticity, and two chapters describe the synthesis of the anti-spastic drug, its metabolism, and pharmacokinetics.

The majority of the book is devoted to clinical trials, often with attempts at objective measurement. While some of these accounts tend to be eulogies, the only paper to measure the drug's action on H-reflex excitability concluded that the drug was inactive in 40% of the patients tested by this method, and there was a rapid decrease in effectiveness in other patients.

This book will be of interest to all those concerned with the treatment of spastic patients, but it is hardly likely to be more than a transient reference book.

GEOFFREY RUSHWORTH

PSYCHIATRIC COMPLICATIONS OF MEDICAL DRUGS Edited by Richard I. Shader. (Pp. 339; \$14.50.) Raven Press: New York. 1972.

The taking of a drug history is today almost as incumbent upon one as is the compiling of the traditional clinical record. The time is therefore ripe for the production of an authoritative publication on psychiatric complications of drug therapy, but unfortunately this book cannot be recommended. There are chapters on digitalis, cortisol, reserpine, belladonna alkaloids and related compounds, L-dopa, amphetamine, antituberculous drugs, androgens and oestrogens, progesterone and oral contraceptives, placebos, one of marginal interest on hormones and behaviour, and a totally irrelevant section on the use

of vitamins in psychiatry. Polypharmacy and drug interaction are mentioned in the introduction but not in detail thereafter. It seems strange that amidst the sounding of warnings a study reporting administration of amphetamine hourly until a psychosis was produced finds a place. The scope of this book is very limited and I would recommend instead a recent article in the *Practitioner*.

J. A. G. WATT

GENETIC STUDIES IN MENTAL SUBNORMALITY Part I. Familial idiopathic severe subnormality: the question of a contribution by X-linked genes By B. C. Clare Davison. Part II. The application of genetic principles to screening for metabolic disorders: the Leybourne Grange survey of mentally subnormal siblings By Peter N. Swift, Philip F. Benson, and John D. Studdy. (Pp. 82; £2.) Royal College of Psychiatrists: London. 1973.

As can be seen from the title, this volume contains two separate studies. That by Dr. Davison centres on the unexplained higher frequency in males of mental subnormality. By selecting families in the Oxford area where there were two or more severely defective persons and where at least one member was alive, the findings were that there was an excess of males in this material and an excess of all-male sibships. The incidence of mental deficiency in relatives was not compatible with polygenic inheritance but favoured an X-linked recessive mode. These patients did not show any specific clinical findings, though there was a significant diminution in the ridge-count in patients from families where only males were affected. There appears therefore to be a considerable contribution to mental deficiency of a disorder or disorders transmitted as an X-linked recessive, although no particular clinical abnormalities are associated.

The second part of this volume is a study of a programme of screening for metabolic disorders in mentally defective patients at Leybourne Grange Hospital. Again the families studied were highly selected, the occurrence of subnormality in a sib being the essential requirement. Again in this group there was an excess of male patients. It seemed likely that some of the patients in this group were suffering from an X-linked disorder and that others, as suggested by the high incidence of parental consanguinity, were suffering from an autosomal recessive condition. In some families biochemical abnormalities were discovered, but as yet their relationship to the intellectual deficit is uncertain.

These studies demonstrated that there is likely to be a great deal of heterogeneity still remaining to be uncovered in the field of mental deficiency. It is by studies such as these that further refinement of diagnostic classification will be achieved.

R. T. C. PRATT