BOOK REVIEWS


This book discusses the results of 300 cases of prefrontal leucotomy, all of them seen personally by the author. The first quarter of the book is devoted to a detailed analysis of the post-operative changes seen in 60 cases of affective disorder in which the disease process was considered not to have affected the basic personality and to have been substantially abolished by the operation. They are thus taken to represent a picture of the deficit in frontal lobe function caused by leucotomy.

In subsequent chapters the results of operation in various diagnostic groups are analysed. The author purposely adopts very broad classifications in his psychotic cases, using grouping such as “unequivocal schizophrenia” or “schizophrenia with affective features”, though he also considers diagnosis under the more detailed headings of Kraepelin’s nomenclature. This is justified by the present state of diagnosis in the psychoses, and will give for the general medical reader a welcome solidity to the diseases discussed. The author educes from the results of each group those factors which seem to be relatively for or against improvement from the operation. These chapters all contain a large amount of factual information, and Dr. Partridge has so marshalled his material that details do not obscure the main line of his argument. They will be of special interest to neurologists and psychiatrists; but the discussion of the post-operative picture in the undeteriorated affective cases will have a wider appeal, to all those, whether clinicians or not, who are interested in frontal lobe functions. These earlier chapters are in some ways the cream of the book, and certainly make fascinating reading. Here the writer’s thoughtful approach is shown at its best, and the many implications of his observations are likely to be as profitable as the facts themselves. To take but one example, the evidence of some intellectual deficit in these cases appears convincing to this reviewer, though it will doubtless give rise to controversy.

Throughout the book the author shows qualities often lacking in modern medical writing. He uses plain English skilfully, writes in a style which avoids pomposity and does not eschew occasional entertainment, states his evidence clearly and avoids dogmatism in interpreting it. The inquiry is a “clinical” one (in the wider sense), without the aid of “adjuvant investigations”, and is a timely illustration of how valuable careful clinical observation can be.

On the practical side, this book should ensure that the detailed structure of previous personality and the emotional and social milieu to which the patient must return be given full consideration in planning operation and in assessing results. Its theoretical contribution is to a clearer understanding of frontal lobe function. It may also suggest lines along which formal tests of this function may profitably be developed. All in all, it is likely to take its place beside Brickner’s detailed study and Freeman and Watts’ work as a real addition to the literature of the subject.


This book gives the first collected experience and opinions of a group of British workers in electroencephalography. When the electroencephalogram (EEG) was first applied clinically, the need was for simple correlations between wave pattern and clinical states, and this stage was excellently represented by the Gibbs’ atlas. Once such correlations were established, an analysis of how normal and abnormal wave forms were composed and what they represented anatomically and physiologically, became of as much interest to the clinician as to the electrophysiologist. The present volume attempts an introduction to this more developed phase of the EEG, while not neglecting the clinically useful aspect of variation of EEG pattern with brain disease. The symposium form of the work is well-adapted to this purpose. It allows Dr. Whitteridge, for instance, to contribute an excellent introduction to neurophysiology, essential to any real comprehension of what the EEG means, while Dr. Grey Walter illustrates its value in the diagnosis and investigation of epilepsy, still an important part of the medical EEG, and Dr. Hill reviews the rapidly growing contribution it is making to problems of neuro-psychiatry. There are chapters on technical and electrical problems, and a large body of work on pharmacological and biochemical changes in the milieu of the brain and their effects on EEG records are also reviewed. Sections on cerebral trauma and neoplasm are included.

The authors of a work of this sort are faced by the difficulties of catering for a wide and often disparate audience. On the one hand the technician-recorderist wishes to know how to avoid or recognize artefacts in the record, and remedy the simpler technical faults and breakdowns in the apparatus; on the other hand the physician or neurologist, often very slightly acquainted with electrical knowledge and even the more recent advances of neurophysiology, wants to know how far the EEG can help him clinically. The book makes a
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This is an atlas which contains a long succession of extracts of electroencephalographic records made with a standard technique using a six channel apparatus. The right hand page shows the records, nearly life size, and the left carries an abstract of the clinical facts relating to the case and a stereotyped description of the records. There must be over 300 of these records but they are grouped in sections, each with a page or two of introduction. The first 20 pages deal with the physics of the subject and the general principles of interpretation. Technicians learning the subject will like to have a collection of records of this sort beside them, but they will surely turn more and more to their own records, which are living things to them in the same way as Dr. Cohn’s lived for him. The trouble is that records of other people are dead things and committing them to print does not bring them to life.


This book is intended primarily to help the clinician in evaluating the data which he obtains from study of the cerebrospinal fluid. It is well adapted to this purpose. The second edition is enlarged, and many sections have been re-written. After some 60 pages summarizing the methods of examination, the remainder of the book describes the findings from the cerebrospinal fluid to be expected in various nervous diseases. The figures include a large number of “normomastix” reaction curves, and a small number showing gold sol and other reactions. The bibliography refers to about forty monographs or collected works on the cerebrospinal fluid but does not include references to scientific or clinical journals.


One might have thought from the title and price of this book that it would provide an adequate introduction to the methods of neurological diagnosis in the usually accepted sense. This however is not so, for the description of neurological examination is surprisingly lifeless and incomplete. For example there is little or no reference to examination for injury to peripheral nerves, muscle diseases, hysterical paralysis, attention hemianopia or disorientation in one visual field. The brief references to functions of the frontal lobes, and to speech functions can be of little help to the student faced with a case in which these require investigation. No less than one-third of the book is devoted to examination of the cerebrospinal fluid and roentgenologic diagnosis, but even here there are statements which provoke disagreement. For example the cerebrospinal fluid (p. 187) if “yellow, under increased pressure with normal or only slightly increased protein” is said practically always to indicate subdural hematoma. It should however be pointed out that this type of fluid is commonly found during recovery from traumatic or spontaneous subarachnoid hemorrhage.


Professor Ewald belongs to the old school of German psychiatrists—thorough, neurologically-disciplined observers, widely read in everything written on their subject in German (except the works of Freud and Jung), and more interested in diagnosis and pathology than in treatment. Both the neurology and the psychiatry in this book attest the relative isolation in which the author and his countrymen lived for a decade and a half, or more. The work is clear and concise: two-fifths of it are devoted to the anatomy and physiology of the nervous system and to its diseases, the remainder to mental disorder with an initial section on normal psychology and psychopathology.


This well published textbook is the third volume of a well-known student’s work of reference. The illustrations are both excellent and original, while there is a correlation of morphology and function which adds to the book’s value. It may however be suggested that a few references to recent work would have emphasized that this is a “living subject,” and would have provided a counterbalance to the traditional belief in the German student in the omnipotent authority of the textbook.


Proceeding in a systematic manner from a philosophical discussion of the body-mind problem, the author defines what he means by psychotherapy and gives an account of its history, its clinical subject matter, its problems and aims. Suggestion and hypnosis, various training procedures, Freudian and other types of psychoanalysis, cathartic methods, the techniques of Adler, Jung, Stekel, and others, dream analysis and psychosynthesis, all are described critically and in detail. Late
in the book, one comes on a description by the author of his own method of "contact-psychology", which is based on his individual theory of psychiatry. This theory is that the one mental disorder of man is schizophrenia and that all neurotic and other abnormal mental processes are manifestations of the schizoid. There is but a single scale: from the normal at one end to the most severe catatonic at the other. Many Freudian and other views are accepted but translated into other terms. Thus the "Oedipus complex" becomes but one form, an early one, of disturbance of contact or of interpersonal relations; that is, a disturbance of the relation between the child and its parents. One or another method of psychotherapy is the only means considered by which these disturbances may be influenced.

While there is abundant evidence in this book of a wide acquaintance with the literature of clinical judgment, experience and insight, and of original thinking, the value of the contribution that is made to psychiatric thought is almost entirely annulled by the extreme point of view from which it is written and by the complete neglect of the biological substrate of human behaviour.

BOOKS RECEIVED

(Review in a later issue is not precluded by notice here of books recently received.)


