BOOK REVIEWS


This small volume contains a short account of the different clinical syndromes and mechanisms comprised under the head of fainting. It is valuable, because it covers ground of equal interest to the neurologist, psychiatrist, cardiologist, and general physician, but ground known to each much better in some parts than in others. Here in simple form is a map of the whole, with selected references to recent literature. It is comprehensive and generally well balanced, but there is a tendency, difficult to avoid in such a short work, to oversimplification. The reader may accept the view that in young persons, especially women, fainting is more often than not hysterical, provided he appreciates that, in the author's definition, a faint does not require loss of consciousness as an essential feature. The reader may, on the other hand, be unwilling to agree with the notion apparently emerging from this book, that all attacks, not fitting into any other classification, must therefore be labelled as hysterical. The author's qualification that the hysterical faint must be capable of symbolic interpretation, is no safeguard against the danger of dismissing a syndrome from further consideration, merely because it is, at present, not understood, because anyone with a little imagination can devise symbols by the dozen.

In the chapter on differential diagnosis, the epileptic variants, especially those with visceral symptoms, are inadequately discussed, and the neurologist may also disagree with the statement that myoclonic epilepsy is that form of epilepsy in which the patient has a sudden loss of muscle tone and falls to the ground, and that familial periodic paralysis is characterized by a weakness which develops so rapidly that the patient falls to the ground completely paralysed. Such statements cause one to consider with reserve the author's opinions about fainting in less familiar fields, such as the cardiological. The distinction between hysterical attacks and psychogenic faints is clearly made, but when the author expresses uncertainty as to whether psychological factors may lead to a sufficient increase of vagal tone to cause asystole and syncope, he underestimates the evidence to the contrary.

These, however, are minor blemishes in a work which contains much valuable information not easily available from other sources. It is clearly written and easy to read, and should be studied with profit by all practising neurologists.


This large work clearly sets out to be a comprehensive text on the examination of the nervous system. The difficulty with any such attempt is that it is bound to include much that is so elementary as to be almost unnecessary, and to miss out something which any given neurologist's own clinical experience leads him to consider important. Further, if inclusiveness is to be balanced by criticism, the text becomes impractically lengthy. This book has avoided the first two difficulties in some measure, though considering its size, adjuvant methods such as intracranial air studies, angiograms, etc., get scant attention; but there is a tendency to include quoted facts without any counterbalancing critical evaluation. References to neuroanatomy and physiology are up to date and useful. The index is occasionally inaccurate. In general it may be doubted whether works of this sort now have much place in neurological literature.


This is an uninspiring book. It is presumably intended as a standard textbook of post-war German neurology for the use of senior students. It illustrates the disadvantages of wars and isolation to the general standard of clinical knowledge, for the references in each section 'are mainly to German literature, and most of the non-German references mentioned are already out of date. The book therefore reads as though it had been written a decade ago. To some extent most textbooks give this impression, but in the first edition of a new work it is usually avoided. The general lay-out is anatomical. After introductory sections on anatomy, physiology and the cerebro-spinal fluid with brief mention of electrical methods of diagnosis, peripheral and cranial nerve diseases (including the peripheral element of the autonomic system), are discussed. The myopathies and spinal cord disease lead on to cerebral syndromes. Finally, the anatomical approach is abandoned, and infections (including syphilis), congenital and degenerative diseases, the extrapyramidal syndromes and toxic and deficiency conditions are considered. A separate chapter is devoted to convulsive disorders. Recent advances in drug treatment both in infections and convulsive disorders are inadequately mentioned, if at all.

The book is well produced and has a good index.
BOOK REVIEWS


This rather expensive volume contains 20 articles by different authors on current neurological and neurosurgical topics. Most of these provide excellent accounts of current knowledge on subjects such as the conduction of the nervous impulse, the frontal lobes, headache, cerebral palsies of infancy, arachnoiditis, meningitis, poliomyelitis, radiculitis and syphilis of the nervous system. The editor expresses the belief that "neurologists will find this book a valuable and even indispensable addition to their library". For those who keep in touch with neurological literature, some of these chapters will have little appeal, but all should find some chapters of interest.


This monograph is based on a study of 203 cases of brain tumour examined by means of arteriography. In the first part, a review is given of the relevant literature. This is followed by a description of the angiographic characteristics of various brain tumours, in which the opinions of many writers are quoted. The author's own observations are summarized in the third part of the paper, and his conclusions conform in most cases to those which are generally accepted.

A pathological circulation was observed in 104 of the 203 cases studied. In the so-called negative group in which this was absent, the majority of lesions were benign. The primary concern of the author was to distinguish benign from malignant tumours, and secondarily he differentiated them into types. How far he has succeeded in the former may be judged by the fact that a misdiagnosis of malignancy in a benign tumour was made in only four of the 104 cases in which a pathological circulation was visible. No malignant tumours in this group were thought to be benign. The distinction cannot, however, be made with certainty in the "negative" cases. The difficulties of distinguishing different types of malignant tumour are emphasized. Sixty-four arteriograms are reproduced.

It would be interesting to know more details of the histological criteria on which the diagnoses were based. This applies particularly to the sarcoma group (six cases), for such diagnosis is seldom made in this country. It would also be of interest to know the histology of the whole tumour in those astrocytomas in which a pathological circulation was seen (two cases), because parts of these might possibly have been undergoing a process of malignant change.

The problem of the differentiation of brain tumours by means of angiography will probably not be solved until more factors are taken into account than the appearances of the arterial phase alone. The circulation time and the nature of the venous vascular channels are particularly important, and also the correlation of vascular patterns with anatomical data. Although the author has stressed the need for a complete study of the progress of contrast through the cerebral circulation, phlebograms were not made in any of his cases: this monograph, therefore, inevitably lacks a sufficient emphasis on these aspects. It will nevertheless be found to contain a useful record of present day knowledge of the subject.


This book is based on the experience of cases of head injury in Vienna during and after the last war. Its author is an assistant in Professor Pötzl's neuropsychiatric clinic, and was neurologist to the special hospital for brain injuries.

After an opening discussion on the mechanism of brain injury in both penetrating and "blunt" head injuries, late complications of brain wounds such as meningitis, abscess, and epilepsy are reviewed. Management and treatment are considered with very little reference to modern chemotherapy. The only anti-convulsants mentioned in any detail are the barbiturates: though boric acid is apparently still being used by the author. These sections are therefore of little value. Motor disabilities are next considered, and a fairly full description of their retraining and physiotherapy is given. A chapter is devoted to lesions of autonomic functions: here the biochemical findings are interesting, but correlation with anatomical brain lesions is inadequate. Further chapters on intellectual disabilities and sensory changes including body schema and spatial disorientation are included. In these, the site of lesion is considered in more detail, though information on this point is still rather meagre—broad groupings such as frontal, parietal, etc., are used without further definition; except for the group showing spatial disorientation and visual disturbance, where site of wounding is plotted on a schematic diagram showing the outline of skull and brain. Disorientation is far commoner with right sided wounds, though the number of such wounds showing hemianopia without disorientation seems surprisingly small. In general, the book does not add much to knowledge of brain localization, though occasional case histories are of interest. As a serious reference book it is greatly handicapped by having no index. Further, it is curiously lacking in references to English and American work, either in the relevant fields of neuropathology and anatomy, or in the more direct clinical sphere. This creates the impression that it is based on the problems and the state of knowledge of twenty years ago. Professor Pötzl, in an introduction, mentions Kleist's "Hirnpathologie" of the 1914–18 war, but the present book falls far short of Kleist's considerable Arbeit. The book costs an exorbitant price as most German publications do at present.


The author of this expensive book begins by explaining
why he, as a general surgeon, has written it. Clearly he has a wide experience of treating accidental cases of head injury, but it can hardly be said that his study provides much advance in knowledge.

Much of the discussion is uncritical, and includes a jumbled collection of quotations from other authors, which are often frankly misleading. Many important aspects of the subject are simply not considered, while his views on subjects such as the importance of dehydration are based on statistics which few will accept. He advises conservative treatment for cerebrospinal rhinorhoea, and even for traumatic pneumatocele, suggestions which will shock most neurosurgeons. There is a comprehensive index in which this reviewer has sought in vain for information about the treatment of meningitis, the effect of crushing injuries, the early recognition of injuries to optic nerve and chiasm, traumatic decerebrate rigidity, prognosis in traumatic diabetes insipidus, treatment of delayed intracranial haemorrhage. Indeed the index is curiously unhelpful; under meningitis, for example, there are several entries but none refers to treatment.


The proceedings of the second International Congress of Electroencephalography held in Paris in 1949, published in this volume, represent a useful symposium on the sort of problems (theoretical as well as practical) that occupy the attention of those working in this field. Formal papers and the reports of more informal discussions are both included. The list of contents shown below gives an indication of the range of subjects treated. It should provide something of interest for those practising in all branches of neurology.

I. Rapports

W. Grey Walter (Bristol). “The Principles and Methods of Location.”


A. Earl Walker. “Electrocorticography in Epilepsy: A Surgeon’s Appraisal.”

M. Brazier (Boston). “A Study of the Electrical Fields at the Surface of the Head.”

W. S. McCulloch (Chicago). “Signes électriques des évènements à distance dans le système nerveux central.”

V. J. Walter et W. Grey Walter (Bristol). “The Effect of Physical Stimuli on the EEG.”


II. Conférences


W. C. McConnel (Chicago). “Comment les structures nerveuses ont des idées.”

III. Symposium sur la classification des épilepsies

H. Jasper et John Kershman (Montréal). “Classification of the EEG in Epilepsy.”


The Gibbs’ atlas of electroencephalography was first published in 1941. It has since become the standard reference work on this subject, and indeed, until quite recently, the only comprehensive textbook on the clinical aspects of the electrical activity of the brain. Now, in the second edition, it has been expanded into two volumes, the first of which, reviewed here, is concerned only with methods and controls. It is significant of the growth of the subject, that, already, the first part is nearly a hundred pages longer than the first edition of the whole work. The section on theoretical background has been enlarged, and now forms an adequate introduction to further reading. Various new techniques of electrode placement and recording are described. The main part of the book is, however, made up of well reproduced EEG tracings (arranged as before according to age groups) illustrating normal records and artefacts, with explanatory comments. It is axiomatic in clinical work that as experience grows, concepts of the range of normal variations become wider, and definition of the pathological becomes more precise. This process, helped by refinements in technique, has been occurring in EEG work during the past decade: so that this record of the range of normals drawn from the authors’ vast clinical material, is invaluable. The book is well indexed, and contains a full range of references, both to classical papers and to recent work. In the introduction, there is a brief biographical note on Hans Berger, the remarkable founder of clinical electroencephalography. If the second volume maintains the high standards of the first, this work, despite its size, will remain an indispensable vade mecum to all those concerned with electroencephalography.


As a result of the application of standardized mental tests throughout the various stages of insulin shock treatment, the author has some interesting things to say about the pattern of regression in declining consciousness, and about some of the accepted psycho-physical typologies. Great emphasis is placed, however, on the difference between hypoglycaemic coma and loss of consciousness from other causes, so that there are regrettably few conclusions of general interest and wider significance.

Although the attempt to make use of the experimental opportunities afforded by modern physical methods of treatment is a welcome one, it is doubtful whether the use of popular tests is necessarily valuable in this field. More information about the mental functions affected is derived from the author’s description of performance on tests devised by himself to verify clinical observations, than from the application of standardized measurements of perception or intellect.


This book will be of considerable interest to neurologists and general physicians as well as to psychiatrists,
Each article makes some attempt to review the literature of its subject for the years after 1943. All contain much quoted information, though they differ in the degree to which this is critically surveyed. This is conditioned to some extent by the material reviewed, but also by the experience and maturity of the writer. In this respect Professor Golla's article on physiological psychology seems especially valuable in presenting and evaluating recent findings. The neuropathology of oligophrenia, Dr. R. M. Norman's contribution, is also a most useful review of a subject to which growing attention is again being paid. Cybernetics has evidently fired the imagination of many psychiatrists, and apart from Dr. W. Ross Ashby's contribution with this title, its methods and concepts are referred to in several of the other articles. The enthusiasm is not, perhaps, as great now as when these articles were written a year or so ago, and it is still too early to judge whether Dr. Ashby's hope, that the techniques of cybernetics may provide a new era of psychiatric advance, will be fulfilled.

The range of subjects is wide, and includes psychiatric genetics, electroencephalography, biochemistry, endocrines, neuropathology, neurosurgery, senescence, aspects of schizophrenia and mental testing.

Many of the articles are concerned with the borderlands of psychiatry—neurology, physiology, biochemistry, and so on. Indeed this volume reflects an atmosphere that seems prevalent in psychiatry at the moment, when there are many "growing points" at the periphery, but somehow less at the central core of the subject. This may not be a bad phase of growth and development, and is perhaps inevitable in an intellectual climate where philosophers and psychologists prefer their psychology without a "psyche".


This book would seem to be part of a movement that is agitating Catholic countries at present—a movement to reaffirm for intellectuals the authority of the Church in the sphere of morals and human behaviour. Dialectical materialism, psychoanalysis, existentialism and the modern positivists have all either explicitly or implicitly attacked the Church's position, some with more success than others. Now, so it seems to the non-Catholic onlooker, the Church is girding its loins afresh for counter attack. In this book the implications of psychoanalysis in the spheres of education, religion and morals are criticized, sometimes acutely. Although some of the authors are well known in medicine, their criticism is based more on logical and philosophical than on medical grounds. It is important to emphasize this outlook, otherwise the book might acquire a spurious authority. The arguments are not new. They are largely those that were first brought against psychoanalysis and are perennially in action against any apparent materialism. This does not mean they are invalid: but it tends to make the book's exemplification of one of the intellectual trends of our times, rather than any intrinsic merit in its arguments, its main interest for the general reader.


A concern for the philosophical implications of neurology is perhaps more prevalent on the Continent than in this country. None the less, no neurologist can fail to be interested in Professor Lhermitte's mature reflections on cerebral physiology, consciousness and memory, and the problem of functional localization in general. Broadly, his aim is to survey recent facts and theories in neurology of relevance to the mind-body problem. His information, simply presented for the general reader, is both pertinent and topical. Thus both hemispherectomy and "le feedback" are mentioned. The general argument is developed with persuasion and wit, and this little book will assuredly find its place in the distinguished French tradition of scientific humanism.

It is impossible to deny that Professor Lhermitte's conclusions will be somewhat of a disappointment to those of us who look to neurology for a better understanding of matters psychological. Arguing from the standpoint of a rigid cartesian dualism, the author holds out little hope that consciousness, intelligence, or memory will ever be related in any fundamental way to nervous structure and function. The search for a cortical localization of psychological functions he dismisses as the pursuit of a chimera. Although neurology may prove relevant to the study of some aspects of behaviour, it can never, in Professor Lhermitte's view, elucidate the fundamental problems of mental life. These, it is implied, will continue to exercise man's wit at the level of philosophical disputation.

This little book must not be confused with a work of identical title published by Professor Henri Piéron some 25 years ago. To avoid repetition, it might seem a pity that Professor Lhermitte did not see fit to entitle the present volume L'Image de Notre Ame.


The first half of this book is a personal biography of Pavlov. Written by the late Professor Babkin, who was a student and colleague of Pavlov's in the early part of the century, it is a sympathetic and fascinating vignette of this great man. At the present time, any picture of Russian life that deals with the more fundamental emotional and temperamental aspects of the Russian character has a special interest. Here we have an obviously authentic picture of the life of a man of science in a land where the old Imperialist régime was breaking up, and the new and more straitening orthodoxy was not yet firmly established. The attitudes and personal relationships described in this biography have a flavour that is strange to Westerners, and which, one must admit, despite a recent overemphasis of the comparison, is reenvisaged by the characters in the works of Turgenev and Dostoevski. Nevertheless there clearly emerges the portrait of a man who was devoted to the high ideals of service to scientific truth and thus to the betterment of humanity, a man who at times combined this idealism with an engaging simplicity in worldly affairs.

Pavlov's conception of "nervism", in which all the
activities of the body are considered to some extent as controlled by the central nervous system, was undoubtedly influenced by the views of Botkins, one of his earliest chiefs; and this conception presumably influences Sperranski and his followers in our own day.

Ivan Pavlov’s "Reflexes of the Brain" was probably the main source of Pavlov’s first interest in conditioned reflexes as a method of approaching behaviour and "psychic" activity. These questions are fully discussed in the biography, but the reference to Bechterov, whose contributions to neurophysiology remain important, is perhaps unduly scathing, and this is understandable, because Dr. Babkin knew Bechterov personally as an unsatisfactory guide to scientific endeavours before Babkin came under Pavlov’s influence.

In the second half of the book the three main aspects of Pavlov's physiological contributions—regulation of the circulation, the work of the digestive glands, and conditioned reflexes—are considered in more detail. The range and depth of Pavlov’s enquiries are impressive. This book should be widely read by all those interested in the fundamentals of biological science. It also has special merit as the work of a liberal scientist who has seriously considered the position of science in culture, and is writing of the man who obviously moulded his own thought deeply; both men were also indelibly Russian.


This supplement to the Acta Psychiatria et Neurologica maintains its usual high standard of typography and general layout. It is based on the study of 897 cases of epilepsy seen in neurological practice in Stockholm. Earlier chapters deal briefly with types of attack, prognosis and treatment, and cases are grouped aetologically under the three headings "cause unknown", "probably known", and "certainly known". The author makes a special plea for this classification rather than that of idiopathic and symptomatic, though it is doubtful whether he makes a very strong case. As far as mental changes and the epileptic personality are concerned, he finds that such traits are common among those cases we would call "symptomatic", and especially in post-traumatic cases. He remarks here that the attempt to force the psychopathological symptoms into a few types of personality is a failure; "the application of elaborate clichés to a large number of patients is a violation of the actual facts"—and many specialists working with epileptics would agree with this statement. In a chapter on social aspects, the view of epileptic criminality is largely discounted. The chapter on genetic factors is a long and important one. His figures seem to suggest that in Sweden, at any rate, the incidence of epilepsy in relatives of epileptics is no larger than it is among the general population, and the family histories of idiopathic and psychoses seem also to be no greater. The Swedish laws forbidding marriage to epileptics of "constitutional" type are reviewed and criticized. This book is certainly worth the attention of all those working on epilepsy.

BOOK REVIEWS

BOOKS RECEIVED

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


* Reviewed in this issue.