BOOK REVIEWS


This monograph gives a detailed account of fluorescent and other dyes, and of radioactive tracers, in the diagnosis and localization of brain tumours. After a brief survey of the blood-brain barrier controversy, the use of fluorescein given by intravenous injection is described at length. Included are full details of the procedure, and of the results obtained in clinical practice with different types of tumour, and in patients with epileptic foci. Among many features of interest are the observation that the application of a coagulating current to the external surface of the dura causes sufficient damage to the underlying cortex to cause it to fluoresce, and the curious finding that meningeomas do not always show much fluorescence although, since their blood supply comes largely from vessels which “are not considered to have the blood-brain-barrier mechanism”, they should invariably fluoresce well.

A short chapter describes the use of highly coloured dyes for similar purposes, but concludes that their clinical use, while theoretically feasible, is not practical, owing to the somewhat prolonged and intense discoloration of the patient.

Studies with radio-opaque substances are described briefly, and the author does not find them suitable for the diagnosis of brain tumours. The next 80 pages describe the use of the radioactive tracers for the localization of brain tumours, and include useful studies of the problems involved and of the clinical results obtained. This method appears of very real use, the chief substances recommended being radioactive di-iodofluorescein and radioactive iodinated human serum albumin. With the latter substance a dose of 450 microcuries of I\(^{131}\) is said to give counting rates of about 10,000 per minute over the skull when using a scintillation counter. The use of radioactive potassium iodide KI\(^{131}\) was also tried in 10 patients with brain tumours, and found to give excellent results. As a precaution the thyroid was “blocked” by prior administration of Lugol’s solution.

Later chapters describe experimental brain tumours in inbred mice, and some useful studies on the blood-brain barrier.

The six colour plates are well chosen, and add greatly to the value of the book. The work is written from a practical and experimental standpoint, and should be of much value to neurosurgeons and research workers wishing to use the techniques described. It includes many useful practical details, and has the admirable feature of describing the difficulties and drawbacks of the various procedures as well as their merits. The book is clearly written and well produced, but not inexpensive. It was given the quinquennial S. D. Gross Award for 1950 by the Philadelphia Academy of Surgery.


This is a clinician’s monograph based mainly on a detailed study of 522 patients suffering from manic-depressive illness in various forms and phases. The author gives excellent clinical descriptions and emphasizes especially the way in which the essential symptoms of cyclothymia may be discerned in the diverse presenting syndromes which are seen as frequently by the general practitioner as by the psychiatrist. In the field of clinical description and treatment the author is on sure ground; but he goes farther and elaborates a hypothesis to the effect that manic-depressive illness is fundamentally a disturbance of the autonomic nervous system. He enumerates 29 symptoms which he regards as evidence of such a disturbance, and he finds that in 82% of his patients various combinations of these predominate over the psychic symptomatology. There is much room for debate about the cause-effect relationship of these groups of symptoms, and not all readers will be convinced that it is quite as simple or as clear-cut as the author suggests. Nevertheless, his ideas are stimulating and should certainly give grounds for reflexion to those who are excessively preoccupied with psychodynamics in this illness.

There are good accounts of the history of the delineation of manic-depressive illness and of the approach to its problems by various schools of thought. References and the index are adequate. The style is pleasant and easy and although the book will be as valuable to the general physician as to the psychiatrist, it could serve its purpose best if it were studied against a background of wider psychiatric reading.


This book is intended to summarize recent work in the neuropsychiatric field, and has been compiled by 81 authors. There is a minimum of discussion, for the book is largely composed of summaries of the principal papers on each subject with only enough comment to lead from one paper to the next. Some authors, commendably anxious to be brief become almost telegraphic, or say, for instance, “The sometimes acrimonious discussion on the sheath as a barrier . . . seems to be settled by the work of . . .” and tantalizingly refrain from telling us in what way it has been settled.
BOOK REVIEWS

With so many authors covering so wide a field the standard and style are bound to vary, but the average level is very satisfactory.


This is a new edition of a well-known book which, when first published 40 years ago, must have been thoroughly up to date. Many chapters are still most helpful to the student, and there is an excellent account of many aspects of the anatomy, physiology, and pathology of the visual apparatus. From the neurologist's point of view, however, the book is disappointing. The recent work on supra-calcine visual disorders is entirely ignored and indeed the important studies of Morris Bender (New York) and of Eberhard Bay (Heidelberg) are not even mentioned.

The illustrations of retinal disorders and of disturbance of ocular movements are few and are technically below present-day standards. Many well-known conditions, such as myasthenia gravis, traumatic lesions of the optic chiasma, wounds of the calcine area, aneurysms of the cerebral arteries, central ocular palsies in poliomyelitis, muscular dystrophy affecting the ocular muscles, and hysterical disorders of vision and eye movements are inadequately considered.


The sub-title of this work might be translated as "Organization and Disorganization of the Personality from the Psychological, Pedagogical, Sociological, and Psychiatric Viewpoint". The theme of the study is "Besinnung," which may be literally translated as reflection or deliberation, but is given a special meaning by the author. It is, in its conception, a superior psychic function, a state of self-reflexion, contemplation, and detachment all in one. This state, in which the personality takes account of itself, recollects and integrates past life, and formulates values for the future, is liable to interference from various sides. It is not attempted, for instance, by the unstable or the callous psychopath; it is disturbed or distorted in schizophrenia; and it is impossible of attainment in the case of some structural lesions of the brain, such as frontal tumour. The author believes that "Besinnung" is an important factor in the normal development of the child and adolescent. He criticizes modern mechanistic philosophies which neglect the value of contemplation and self-reflexion.

BOOKS RECEIVED

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


ANNOUNCEMENTS

Symposium Neuroradiologicum

The fourth Symposium Neuroradiologicum will be held in London from September 13 to 17, 1955.

Radiologists, neurosurgeons, neurologists, and others interested will be most welcome. All wishing to contribute papers are invited to communicate as soon as possible with the Honorary Secretary, Dr. R. D. Hoare, at the National Hospital, Queen Square, London, W.C.1.

Sixth Latin-American Neurosurgical Congress

The sixth Latin-American Neurosurgical Congress (Secretary-General Dr. R. Arana-Iniguez, Convencion 1287, Montevideo) will be held in Montevideo from March 21 to 24, 1955, together with the 2nd South-American Electroencephalographical Congress (Secretary-General, Dr. P. Pinto Pupo, San Pablo, Brazil). Intending visitors should apply before October 1, 1954.