BOOK REVIEWS


English speaking neurologists have reason to be grateful for any work by Cajal which becomes available in their language, and reason to complain that in fact so little of it is available. It would be a great boon to many of us if some research monies could be diverted to finance an English translation of Cajal's great work on vertebrate neuroanatomy, and a new edition of his book on "Degeneration in the Nervous System".

The present volume is a translation of a series of papers on the olfactory system and the limbic cortex which appeared in 1901 and 1902, and which contain the results of what is probably the most thorough single investigation of the structure of these regions that has been undertaken. The subject is topical, in view of the great interest which has recently been shown in the workings of the temporal cortex, and in the question of the functional relationship between the olfactory system on the one hand and the hippocampus and fornix system on the other.

The translation is inelegant, often to the point of being barely English; on the other hand, the meaning of the sentences is almost always clear. Some of the terminology is not in current use, and one is not always sure to what extent named structures are peculiar to the animal species under investigation, and to what extent they are homologous with structures in the primate brain. The translator cannot be blamed for this; nonetheless, it would have been an added kindness if the producers of the book could have added an appendix setting out the relevant details of comparative anatomy, and a glossary of unfamiliar terms.


Dr. Davson's book constitutes a major contribution to the literature of his subject. Unlike many of the monographs published on highly specialized subjects, this book has the great merit of being clearly intended for a certain group of readers, namely, for those engaged in research on the problems of the formation and absorption of the ocular and cerebrospinal fluids and of the nature of the so-called barriers between the blood and the several fluids. For such, this book is an essential possession; but in addition Dr. Davson's exposition of the fundamental physiological principles involved is so clear that medical students (especially those reading for an honours degree in physiology) should also find some sections of it extremely useful.

Although not himself either a neurologist or neuro-physiologist, the freshness of Dr. Davson's approach to the problems of the cerebrospinal fluid, and the way in which these problems are presented in parallel with the analogous problems connected with the eye, makes this book most stimulating. But, at least as regards the C.S.F., he has not altogether resisted the temptation that besets so many workers in this field of theorizing beyond his evidence. The excellent bibliography could be made more useful in future editions if an index of authors were included at the end of the book.

Clinical Examination in Neurology. Sections of Neurology and Section of Physiology. By Members of the Mayo Foundation. (Pp. xviii + 370; 76 figures. 52s. 6d.) London: W. B. Saunders. 1956.

This well-published handbook is written by 16 members of the Mayo Foundation. All teachers of neurology will find something worth copying, and perhaps also something to criticize in its pages.


This is a comprehensive and well published reference work on papilloedema and papillitis. The early chapters discuss the relevant anatomy and physiology and the physiopathology of oedema of the brain retina and optic nerve. The methods of investigation are then considered and in the later sections the clinical varieties of the condition are exhaustively dealt with. An extensive bibliography completes a useful work of reference.


In 16 essays 23 contributors all actively engaged in working upon unsolved problems in neurology present their preliminary results. In many of these they are opening wider vistas for themselves and for others. The essays of Scheinberg on hepato-ionic degeneration, of I. B. Wilson and Altamirano on the acetylcholine mechanism, Tower on the biochemical lesions in epilepo-genic cortex, and of Kennedy on the gross cerebral metabolism of children are outstanding.

This publication reports the Proceedings of the First International Meeting of Neurobiologists held in August 1955. Those who are interested in, but not engaged in, neurophysiological researches will find in these papers some valuable indications of the trends of current work. They include a study of the distance which separates individual cortical nerve fibres from each other, and the site of fibre synapses in the cortex, the inhibitory pathway to motoneurones, the possible function of the pineal gland, and the fibre structure of the reticular formation.


This is the second, and enlarged, edition of a textbook of neurosurgery which was first published six years ago. The author is one of the outstanding neurosurgeons in Spain, and has had much to do with the development of his specialty in that country. He began his training in England under the late Sir Hugh Cairns, and served his apprenticeship in Mexico before returning to start a neurosurgical clinic in Madrid.

The book, written in Spanish, is a sound exposition of current neurological thought and practice. There are chapters on clinical diagnosis, special investigations, pathology, infections, tumours, epilepsy, malformations, neuralgias, extrapyramidal syndromes, and technique—on all of which the subject writes with the authority of a considerable experience. There is a comprehensive bibliography. The numerous illustrations are adequate but on the whole they do not match the excellence of the text.

This is a useful volume for those who read Spanish and no well-found library should be without it.


This monograph is based on the authors’ personal experience of 439 cases of cerebral tumour of which 229 were studied because of mental changes. There is an extensive description of the nature of these changes which are subdivided into confusional states and dementia, disorders of personality, and episodic effects such as hallucinations. This classification forms the basis of several tables which demonstrate considerable localizing value of certain symptom-complexes. The section on tumours of the mesencephalon and diencephalon is particularly interesting because of the occurrence of defects of memory and Korsakow's syndrome, of which four cases had tumours accurately localized in the region of the mammillary bodies. The bibliography contains many references to the French literature. The work is a very useful survey of the mental changes in cerebral tumours and their value in localization.


This book is the fourth in the series of Bellevue Studies of Child Psychiatry. It discusses the psychopathology of children frustrated by various organic brain disorders, such as congenital deviations, birth injuries, encephalitis, cerebellar disorders, head injuries, and maturation defects. It consists essentially of papers published over the last 25 years or so by Professor Bender and her colleagues, some re-written with new material. It is doubtful whether a collection of papers can be welded into a successful textbook, and one gets the impression that this book is a collection of fragments, albeit inspired fragments. It lacks balance, and important subjects, such as congenital diplegia and epilepsy, are not allowed their due importance. Professor Bender has rendered a service by making these scattered papers available in a more convenient form; but it should not be assumed that the book provides a balanced and thorough coverage of its subject.

BOOKS RECEIVED

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


