BOOK REVIEWS


This book has been compiled from a series of lectures given in 1957-58 at the Institute of Neurology, National Hospital, Queen Square, London. The contributors have distinguished names in the realms of biochemistry and neurology, and under the editorship of Professor Cumings and Dr. Kremer, a valuable collection of information and ideas has been produced.

In successive chapters the emphasis is placed alternately on biochemistry and neurology, and this order is to be recommended as introducing the enquiring clinician to biochemical principles and progress before relating these to the clinical problems with which he is more familiar.


The application of quantitative methods to the histology of the cortex has been pursued enthusiastically over 25 years by Professor Bok. Much of the material presented here on the thickness and curvature of the cerebral cortex and on the differences between architectonic zones offers a considerable simplification of a complex picture.

The concept of interfibril vacuoles subserving memory is a fascinating one. Perhaps its chief interest will lie in offering some basis for calculating the number of units involved in human memory.

It is becoming clear that studies such as these are required to solve the computational problems involved in the understanding of nervous function.


In preparing a second edition of this book the authors have been obliged to re-write most of it owing to the great advances in knowledge of the past 10 years. The book consists of two main parts. The first is concerned with clinical syndromes caused by diseases of each part of the hemispheres, while the second is concerned especially with disorders of speech and perception, with emphasis “sur les problèmes physiopsychopathologique”. The result of this presentation is a most helpful and up-to-date review of current knowledge with carefully chosen references from all parts of the world. Neurologists and psychiatrists will find this a most useful volume.


This is a collection of historical papers on the structure and function of the cerebral cortex, published between 1824 and 1911. As is usually the case, a perusal of the original paper often corrects current views on exactly what the author said. This is one of the values of such a collection. Another is that they represent the collectors’ views on what constitutes important papers on the subject. In this case, the collection is made by Professor von Bonin, and his judgment of what is important and the reasons he gives for this in his introduction add to its value.


This interesting book is concerned with much more than the occipital lobe. The various contributors give authoritative accounts of many anatomical, physiological, and psychological aspects of vision, and for these the occipital lobe is only one of many regions involved.

Visual reactions provide some of the most important opportunities of studying cerebral function. The visual agnosias, the various states of inattention, and loss of the capacity to localize objects in one visual field, are examples of the phenomena which attract special interest, and for those working in this field, Professor Alajouanine’s book will be a useful work of reference.


This is a very promising first volume in a new series published by the Academic Press. The scope of the series is to include accounts of recent progress in the anatomy, biochemistry, physiology, and pharmacology of the nervous system in both neurological and psychiatric spheres.

Almost one third of the book is taken up by Purpura writing on the nature of electrocortical potentials. This is a most comprehensive and scholarly study which will be appreciated by many workers in the field of electrography.

Adey reviews recent work on the rhinencephalon in relation to epilepsy and behaviour; Hebb, Pfeiffer, Heath, Martens and Melander, and Georgi write on the recent developments in biochemical studies of nervous...
transmission and mental illness. An article on visual physiology by Granger gathers together much information on the effects of physiological stresses and drugs on visual function. The bibliographies appear to be very comprehensive. There is an index of authors quoted in the text and one of subjects. These help to make the volume a useful and critical reference book in which many will find much to interest them.


This is an interesting book and provides an enormous amount of information and very many references with regard to the most important years of development. The importance of study of the early years of life cannot be exaggerated, for they are vital to the student of the brain, of education, of mental health, and even of national aspirations.

Paediatric neurology is a somewhat neglected field of research and this book will stimulate interest in this direction.


Paediatrics has been described as the last bastion of general medicine. It attempts to be self-sufficient: and it is certainly true that most cases of neurological disease in infancy and childhood are not seen by neurologists. This is a loss to both paediatrics and neurology. The discipline of neurology draws increasingly on the rapid advances being made in basic neurophysiology and neuropathology, and this colours and enlarges its approach to diagnosis and treatment. Any attempt to widen the present narrow bridge between the two subjects is therefore to be welcomed, and the present volume makes some contribution to this. The opening chapter is devoted to a summary of the anatomical and functional organization of the nervous system in the first two years of development; and this is followed by the normal development of the infant in clinical terms, derived largely from work on developmental diagnosis. These sections are excellently done and a useful addition to the usual tests. Subsequent chapters cover the ground adequately but are somewhat uneven. The discussion on birth injuries and "cerebral palsy" hovers uneasily between aetiological, anatomical, and clinical classifications. The pleomorphic symptomatology of infantile subdural haematoma is not brought out. Amongst vascular disorders concussion is included: while acute disseminated lupus erythematosus makes an even more surprising appearance. A number of virus encephalitis are discussed but it is not made clear that in the majority the diagnosis is only established by adequate antibody studies. The acute emergency for treatment that purulent meningitis, especially pneumococcal, may constitute is not adequately emphasized. Metabolic and endocrine disorders are adequately dealt with, though the urgent need to diagnose phenylketonuria at birth if mental defect is to be avoided, is not emphasized. The description both clinical and histological of the cerebral leucodystrophies does not include the advances made in the last few years. Though written mainly from a paediatric point of view this book's special value lies in drawing attention to the existence of important common ground between the neurologist and the paediatrician.

**Surgery in World War II: Neurosurgery.** Volume II. Medical Department, United States Army. (Pp. xxvi + 705. 283 figures. $7.00.) Published by the Office of the Surgeon General, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. 1959.

The second volume of the achievements of American neurosurgeons during World War II is concerned with injuries to the spine and to peripheral nerves. The record presented is one to be proud of, and all interested in such injuries should study this volume.

**Mental Subnormality.** By W. Alan Heaton-Ward. (Pp. 64; illustrated. 6s.) Bristol: John Wright. 1960.

In this small book the author has succeeded in encompassing a wide variety of topics connected with mental subnormality within the space of about 60 pages. The writing is clear, straightforward, and well-informed. It is obvious that the author is drawing upon his own practical experience in the field of mental deficiency. There are sections on aetiological and clinical aspects, care of patients, and psychometry. Finally legal considerations of the case of the mentally subnormal under the new Mental Health Act are discussed in a lucid and helpful manner.

The sections are well set out and comprehensively indexed. One feels that they could have been expanded to sizeable textbook chapters. Instead, a great deal of information is condensed under the various headings, and while in some parts detailed information is given, elsewhere only a bare outline is drawn. Thus, for example, although the genetics of various clinical types of mental subnormality are discussed, apart from an indication that the condition is determined by a single recessive gene, no mention is made of the interesting genetics of gargoylism, or Hurler's disease (misprinted "Hunter's" disease on page 22).

This book, though perhaps setting out to achieve too much in too small a space, is readable and authoritative. It would serve well as an introduction to the subject of mental subnormality as long as it were not regarded as an exclusive source of reference.

The cover would be more attractive without the embellishment of a blind boy.

**Institutional Neurosis.** By Russell Barton. (Pp. 56. 8s. 6d.) Bristol: John Wright. 1959.

In this booklet the author describes in a systematic form the changes that result from institutional life unless the organization is such that they are averted. These changes he calls "institutional neurosis", characterized by apathy, lack of initiative and interest, submissiveness and so on, and with a characteristic posture ("hands held
across the body or tucked behind an apron, the shoulders dropped and the head bent forward”) and gait (“with a shuffling quality and restricted movement at the pelvis, hips, and knees”). He goes on to describe the causes of this condition, the environment of a mental hospital so frighteningly familiar to one who knows them. (“This patient is becomingly nicely institutionalized and gives no trouble”. “Having E.C.T. weekly and not now aggressive.”)

Cure of the condition may be a long process involving not only the doctor but also nurses, occupational therapists, psychiatric social workers, and indeed all the staff of a mental hospital. Both cure and prevention call for far more staff and money than is usually allocated to mental hospitals, still the Cinderellas of the National Health Service.

This is a small book but a very important one. It should be compulsory reading for all those who have to deal with mentally ill patients.


This small book is the report of a W.H.O. study group on the mental health problems of automation which met in Geneva in 1958. The authors discuss the possible mental health consequences of strain among individual workers in automated plants, the repercussions of social change through the introduction of automation (for example the adaptation of the older workers), and make recommendations for future research into these problems. The book can be recommended to industrial medical officers concerned with these matters.

**Books Received**

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


**Second International Congress of Neurological Surgery**

The Second International Congress of Neurological Surgery will be held at The Statler Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. from October 14 to 20, 1961, under the sponsorship of the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies. Further information may be obtained from the Secretary-General of the Congress, Dr. Bronson S. Ray, 525 E. 68th Street, New York 21, N.Y.