Book reviews


The authors of this small monograph confine themselves to a discussion of downward herniations of the brain through the tentorial opening and to those caused by intracranial tumours. Each aspect of the subject—anatomy, mechanisms, pathology, clinical features, and treatment—is dealt with seriatim. Much of the information set out is derived from recent literature but a detailed analysis of 130 brain tumour cases with herniation is added.

The presentation of a multitude of facts and opinions derived from many authors invariably poses a difficult problem; in this work 254 references are cited, many at some length. The authors have failed to solve this problem and the numerous references in each section are tedious to read and difficult to assimilate. Little appears in summary of these facts and the conclusions drawn by the authors are curiously difficult to detect. This is a pity, for most readers would value the opinions of two neurosurgeons of experience working in a great centre rather than a repetition of those of others freely available in the literature.

The suggestion that this complication of intracranial tumours is of recent recognition will come as a surprise to most European readers as will also the belief that 'incisure' is the English word most commonly used to describe the tentorial opening. The chapter on treatment is the shortest and some more detailed description of operative procedures and their results and complications would have been helpful.

To the experienced neurosurgeon this book will bring little that is new, but to those in training it may prove to be a useful collection of facts and a guide to recent literature.


Over the past 30 years Franz Alexander has been one of the most prominent of the European psychoanalysts in the United States. The present volume, comprising a selection of his many articles, displays abundantly his concern with the technical aspects of the psycho-analytic method, with psychosomatic medicine, and with the application of his field to sociology, criminology, and the history of ideas. To many of his colleagues Alexander's somewhat heterodox views have placed him left of central dogma, for he has not only pointed out that ' ... since the discovery of the role of transference and resistance as proposed in Freud's technical papers between 1912 and 1915 no great technical advances have been made' (p. 572), but he has attempted to make his own modifications of practice and theory. This flexibility of approach, however, has commended itself to American psychiatrists and Alexander has a personal stake in his claim ' ... that in the United States, not in Europe, psychiatry has assimilated Freud's principles and has become what one may call a psychoanalytically oriented psychiatry' (p. 541). Recognizing as he does that 'the cardinal test of therapeutic procedures in the whole field of medicine is therapeutic result' (p. 572), Alexander is also aware that achievement breeds expectation and that American psychoanalysts cannot afford complacency on this score if they are to meet the cloud of criticism which has been gathering since the mid-50s. Hence his recent emphasis on the need to study the whole psychotherapeutic process afresh. For those of its readers who accept the Freudian cosmology this is then a volume of general interest. But for the remainder it will seem, like so many of its kind, largely derivative, irritatingly pretentious, and prohibitively expensive.


The renewal of interest in the problems of mental subnormality is a recent phenomenon in the United States. These proceedings of the 1959 annual meeting of the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease provide us with a guide to current American work in the field. The papers are grouped in five sections covering The Developmental Process, Genetics, Prenatal Defects and Neonatal Injuries, Environmental Deprivation, and Treatment. Most of them are of the high quality which the reputation of their authors would lead one to expect. It is noteworthy, however, how little attention is paid to the social aspects of the subject.


A remarkable feature of present-day research is that experimental psychologists are perhaps carrying out more investigations on neurophysiological problems than anyone else. This is both natural and reasonable and the reader will appreciate that it may be politically advantageous to maintain a now somewhat artificial barrier between psychology and physiology. In this volume the work of 40 research workers is reported and provides a vivid presentation of the wide range of research work in this field being undertaken in many centres in the U.S.A.

SCANDINAVIAN NEUROSURGICAL SOCIETY

The 17th annual meeting of the Scandinavian Neurosurgical Society will be held in the University Central Hospital, Topeliusgatan 5, Helsinki, Finland, on Friday and Saturday, 6 and 7 September 1963. Further particulars from Dr. Gunnar af-Björkesten, the University Central Hospital, Topeliusgatan 5, Helsinki, Finland.