
The publication of an English translation of Rio-Hortega's monograph on tumours of the nervous system has an assured welcome. Neuroanatomists, neurophysiologists, and neuropathologists will applaud this edition as a tribute to a distinguished pioneer whose patient work of outstanding originality forms part of the foundations of their speciality. In addition to this fitting recognition the present publication makes available to a wider public of pathologists and oncologists the bulk of Rio-Hortega's observations on tumours of the nervous system, observations based on the application to tumours of those silver staining techniques that were Hortega's special genius. Though much of Hortega's work has passed into current textbooks it is refreshing to read his original deliberations and to note where he took an independent line, which may yet prove fruitful.

The translation is into excellent contemporary prose and the selected figures amply justify their inclusion. The general format is most pleasing.

J. TREvor Hughes

MYEOLOGY By R. Shapiro. (Pp. 278; 236 figures. 82s.) Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers Inc. A textbook devoted to the subject of myelography is long overdue. This volume, which runs to nearly 300 pages and contains over 200 illustrations, covers the subject well. A fairly adequate bibliography is appended at the end of the various chapters.

Over one-third of the book is devoted to the normal appearances both anatomical and radiographic, together with a description of artefacts. The subject matter is clearly presented and there are a number of good line drawings which help to clarify the descriptions.

The book might have been better entitled 'Positive contrast myelography' in that only passing reference is made to pneumomyelography. This is a little unfortunate as the latter method, which is practised in quite a number of centres, can be very rewarding if tomography is utilized.

One gets the impression that the emphasis on the various pathological aspects is a little unbalanced. More space might well have been devoted to tumours and perhaps a little less to intervertebral discs.

The last chapter is on 'discography', a technique whereby the intervertebral disc is injected with a fluid contrast substance. It must be admitted that 'pretty' radiographs result from this technique but the reviewer has yet to be convinced that the method has a practical application in surgery. One cannot help feeling that this is a technique whereby it is possible to convert a normal disc into a pathological one and the author himself draws attention to the potential danger of infection.

This book can be recommended to all specialists interested in the subject and it has the further merit of being relatively inexpensive.

JAMES BULL


This is a wholly admirable monograph on a subject which concerns orthopaedic surgeons and any others who may be involved in the treatment of injuries. As pathologist to the Birmingham Accident Hospital, the author has had a vast experience of fat embolism in all its manifestations, and the record of his experience leaves little to be said. The main emphasis is on the pathological features, but there are good chapters on the clinical aspects, diagnosis, and treatment. The section on treatment begins with Skirving's statement in 1882 that 'treatment (is) of little avail... prophylaxis, as little handling of the injured parts as possible'. Dr. Sevitt says that little can be added to this, although supportive measures such as the administration of oxygen and antibiotics, and modern methods of managing the comatose patient (such as tracheostomy and control of fluid and electrolyte balance) may save some patients and improve the quality of survival in others.

J. PENNYBACKER


This book contains a series of talks given at the opening of the Brain Research Institute of the University of California. The names of the contributors, which include Kety, Magoun, Percival Bailey, Gaddum, and Geoffrey Harris amongst others, suggests that the standard of these essays will be high. Harris’s review of neuroendocrinology and its very wide ramifications is one amongst many excellent contributions. The book is enlivened by some pictures of earlier and famous neurologists. The book can be recommended as a short review of research activity on cerebral function in its wider sense.


Magnesium metabolism has, until recent years, been a comparatively neglected topic, despite the indications from physiologists, enzymologists, and others of its importance in cell processes. The development of more satisfactory flame-photometric processes for the estimation of small amounts of magnesium in biological materials has, however, opened up the subject, and interest in it is now developing fast.

Dr. Hänze’s small monograph is a useful compilation of much of the background information that we now possess about the part that magnesium plays in cell processes. It is divided into two main sections, the physiology of magnesium metabolism and the clinical aspects and applications. The first of these deals with the distribution of magnesium in the animal body, with its uptake, transport, and excretion, and with its importance in the cell. The second surveys briefly the syndrome of magnesium deficiency in animals and in man, and also the few available facts which we possess concerning disturbances of magnesium metabolism in different diseases.
There is also a short section on the methods of estimation of magnesium in body fluids and tissues. A 10-page bibliography is included, and the monograph can be recommended as a useful addition to the literature of a field that is at present not too well covered.

R. H. S. THOMPSON


This volume (in French and in English) reports the proceedings of an international conference held in Montpellier in August 1961: there were 41 participants from 14 countries. The subject is of enormous contemporary interest to both physiologists and clinicians and many will find this collection of authoritative articles to be of very great interest and value.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES IN NEUROLOGICAL DIAGNOSIS


This book, written by an experienced clinical psychologist, brings together a good deal of useful information concerning psychological tests and their applications in clinical neurology. Although the author perhaps takes her tests a little too seriously, there is no doubt that she is well aware of the snags and does not claim too much for her methods.

Her detailed accounts of the psychometric findings in a variety of clinical cases should be of considerable value to the neophyte, so often perplexed by the range and inconsistency of psychological deficit. It is a pity, however, that so little attempt is made to relate the test methods to the classical syndromes of organic neurology or to suggest more precise experimental analysis of the deficits which their use may disclose. The mere existence of a psychological test, often devised for quite other purposes, is not necessarily a good reason for its use in the neurological clinic. To have value, a test should relate to deficits already known to be of diagnostic significance or to aptitudes important for occupational resettlement. Some of Dr. Burgemeister’s tests, such as the Bender-Gestalt and certain of the Wechsler-Bellevue subtests, would appear to satisfy this criterion. Others, for example, the Rorschach, almost certainly do not.

PHYSICAL METHODS OF TREATMENT IN PSYCHIATRY, 4th ed.


This is the fourth edition and the twentieth year of publication of this useful work. It maintains its high standards, and the present edition has the advantage of a younger mind in Dr. Peter Dally as co-author. This is the first new edition for nine years. Physical methods, especially drugs, have blossomed luxuriantly during this time. However, a reasonably critical attitude has been maintained without serious sacrifice of therapeutic novelty. Here Dr. Slater’s statistical expertise will stand his readers in good stead. A hundred pages of the 313 pages of text are still devoted to leucotomy and insulin treatment. Both these have been considerably eroded by new drug treatments and will probably be pruned in later editions. Meanwhile the book remains a balanced guide to physical treatment in psychiatry.


This book will be known to English readers through the late E. B. Strauss’s translation of the fourth German edition, which appeared in 1934. It is unusual in that it belongs neither to the Kraepelinian nor to the Freudian tradition, being far more an attempt to envisage psychopathological issues along the lines of Jacksonian evolutionary neurology. A rather perfunctory comparison of this edition with Strauss’s translation does not suggest that there has been any great change in the author’s outlook, though some new material has been added and a few sections extensively revised. (Unfortunately, this revision does not extend to the author’s classification of physique and temperament, which appears here much as it did 30 years ago.) Nonetheless, Professor Kretschmer’s book has much to commend it, and should be of interest to neurologists in search of a rational basis for psychological medicine.


For many years Professor Schipkowskys of Sofia has paid special attention to the relationship between criminal behaviour and mental subnormality. In his monograph he surveys this large topic and discusses most of the related issues. After a brief historical survey and an outline of the various concepts of mental subnormality different types of criminal behaviour are reviewed in turn, each one illustrated by clinical examples. The author lays great stress on the part played by disorders of personality among the criminally subnormal and he tackles the vexed problem of responsibility in terms of this association. Even if all his opinions will not command universal agreement his arguments are always lucid and the case material of great interest, especially to workers in the forensic field.

MICHAEL SHEPHERD