**Book reviews**


This is the second volume of collected papers by Lord Brain on a variety of para-medical subjects. Some are simply pleasant 'pièces d'occasion', but some achieve genuine essay form, that most difficult genre. The book is illustrated with attractive drawings by Norman Smith.

In 'Neurology Past and Present' we are given vignettes of great figures (some will be personally known to his readers) embellished with those small side lights on personality that were a feature of 'Tea with Walter de la Mare' and which will remain valuable candles for the future biographer or historian.

The two short papers on William Harvey display him once more with a mind alert, curious and well endowed, with the logic of observation under controlled conditions. Aubrey's gossip of the day gives us a telling and human picture and incidentally brings forward a rival originator for the circulation of the blood: but with Harvey's intellectual stature before us Mr. Walter Warner's claims cannot be viewed as part of that 'iniquity of oblivion that blindly scattereth her poppies'.

In 'The Diagnosis of Genius' the author returns to the theme of his earlier volume. There the problem was exemplified. Here he handles the central question with assurance and widely ranging interest. The rather two-dimensional approach to criticism which C. S. Lewis surprisingly stood for, will not appeal to those who welcomed the impact 25 years ago of Edmund Wilson's early essays. They added an exhilarating depth and reality to the subject. Lord Brain is on the side of the more full and rounded approach to genius, most of which has perforce to be judged by its remains. He argues the case convincingly.

Perhaps one of the most topical and also perennial subjects is 'The Need for a Philosophy of Medicine'. The theme is touched on also in other papers. We live in an age when an older philosophy and its assumptions are no longer readily applicable. Like Mr. Carlyle's church clothes, they are sometimes sorrowfully out-at-elbows. It is our good fortune to have to think afresh as these essays will help us to do.

The book will be of interest to many. It should be recommended especially to the beginner in medicine if only because it shows that the discipline of medicine is not a straitjacket. If education is opening windows on the world then for the educable medicine still bids fair to be the best of liberal educations.

C. W. M. WHITTY


Illustrations provide an admirable way of visualizing a pathological process whether it be in the primary assimilation of knowledge or for purposes of revision. The advantage of polychrome photography is that the colours are permanent, contrasting with those of museum specimens and histological preparations both of which are wont to fade. While many of the reproductions in this atlas are of good quality, there are others that are not agreeable whether viewed in day light, fluorescent light, or common electric light. Some of the colours are dull and unsuitable; for instance, the student will experience difficulty in finding the plaques in the caudal end of the brain depicted from a case of multiple sclerosis and one wonders what advantage is gained in visualizing a gumma in so unfortunate a colour as has been chosen for the purpose.

In the histological preparations counter-stains are too heavy, so that nuclear detail is obscured. Nissl's stain, designed to tone down the intricacies of the neurolipid, seems in fact to have been seldom employed. It is true that some special stains have been utilized, but the results are not always pleasing. Some of the photomicrographs are not sharp and one is decidedly out of focus. The captions could with advantage be more detailed and arrows would help in the identification of some of the cells, as for instance the microglia on page 260. The anatomical diagrams are excellent and most useful. An admirable feature of this book is that diseases are mostly treated on the basis of individual case histories, a method that is particularly suitable when the reader wishes to refresh his memory. The accompanying text is reduced to the minimum but is not without inaccuracies.


This book is concerned with the cause, cure, and prevention of post-lumbar puncture headache. A historical introduction considers the various views put forward on aetiology and treatment. The authors conclude that views vary widely and factual evidence is scanty. They describe the syndrome in 24 normal volunteers, but the time range and general clinical accompaniments are narrower than are met with in clinical practice. They find the syndrome more common in neurological diagnosis than after spinal anaesthetics. However they seem unaware of the difficulties of comparing these two disparate settings, just as they appear to think it is useful to quote from many past publications when, on their own admission, factual data are often entirely lacking.

What does not appear very clearly from the monograph is that inexperienced operators, blunt and large-bore needles, and immediate post-operative activity in patients, all appear to increase incidence, that complaints (as opposed to occurrence) of post-lumbar puncture headaches are infectious and psychogenic features often operate, and, on the other hand, that attention to these details when the incidence has become high in a ward will always sharply reduce it. They suggest that the extradural leak theory of aetiology is one of several, but produce no evidence for others, and no evidence that is not strictly compatible with this one, which is in fact very generally accepted. Indeed, the book makes a mysterious mountain out of a fairly well mapped mole-hill; from the preface more seems to be promised.
CURRENT ACHIEVEMENTS IN GERIATRICS Papers read at a Conference on Medical and Surgical Aspects of Ageing in Glasgow, 20-22 November 1963, under the auspices of The Glasgow Postgraduate Medical Board edited by W. Ferguson Anderson and Bernard Isaacs. (Pp. xii + 268. 30s.) London: Cassell & Co. Ltd. 1964. This collection of papers opens with a brief review of current views of normal and abnormal ageing, and proceeds to studies on cerebrovascular disease, urology, psychiatry, and a wide range of clinical topics such as hypothermia, negative nitrogen balance, and pressure sores. The chapters on bladder dysfunction, particularly those on urinary incontinence, are extremely valuable, for treatment of this, if based on correct physiological principles, can be most rewarding; normal physiology, and the technique and interpretation of cystometry, are all well presented. The section on psychiatry presents many interesting studies, most notable being that on the prevalence of psychiatric disorder in old people in the general population; the extent of the problem is great, as shown by the fact that only a small fraction of such old people are being cared for in institutions. The importance of prophylaxis in this field is once again stressed.

DAS RÖNTGENBILD DES SCHADELS BEI INTRAKRANIELLER DRUCKSTEHUNG IM WACHSTUMSLÄRER By W. Töniss and G. Friedmann. (Pp. vii + 107; 80 figures. DM.58.-) Berlin: Springer Verlag. 1964. The diagnostic value of conventional radiography of the skull is often overshadowed by the information gained from specialized contrast examinations in neuroradiology. This book is important as it is a strong reminder that essential information is frequently provided by plain radiography of the skull, and this point is stressed by the authors in the examination of children and adolescents. Careful study of the survey examination of the skull may often indicate the type of radiological examination most likely to provide added information, or such study may even make further specialized diagnostic neuroradiology unnecessary.

The authors have a wide experience and the material analysed is based upon the conventional radiology and case histories of 626 patients with raised intracranial pressure. The variability of sellar changes in increased intracranial pressure in children has been carefully evaluated, and the approximate duration of increased pressure could often be deduced from the type of bone change in the sella turcica. The duration of increased pressure could seldom be determined from the type or extent of suture diastasis, and pathological deepening of the digital impressions was found to be of limited value in the assessment. The authors support the prevailing opinion among radiologists that the normal variability of digital impressions on the inner table of the vault in children makes this sign difficult to evaluate.

Pathological calcification in intracranial tumours is probably more commonly seen in children than in adults, and the authors confirm that the pattern of calcification in intracranial tumours occurring during the first two decades of life is seldom type specific. However, the anatomical distribution of demonstrable calcification may lead to a definitive diagnosis, as for example in craniopharyngeomas.

Much of the detailed description of the skull changes associated with supratentorial and infratentorial lesions in children has appeared on occasion elsewhere in the world literature, but this presentation is good and concise and the book is full of illuminating details about the variable radiological appearances in increased intracranial pressure from various causes, of value in differential diagnosis both to the radiologist and to the clinician.

The numerous illustrations are of uniformly high quality, and the bibliography is worldwide and excellent but has a few outstanding omissions; the meticulous work of Mahmoud El Sayed on sellar changes in increased intracranial pressure should certainly have received acknowledgement. These are small criticisms, however, and, for those with a working knowledge of the German language, this book will be found to be a most valuable contribution to the subject.

GORDON L. GRYSPEERDT

LECTURES ON CONDITIONED REFLEXES (2 vols.) By I. P. Pavlov. Translated with an introduction by W. H. Gantt. (Pp. 5—613; 2 figures; 20 tables; 2 diagrams. 63s.) London: Lawrence & Wishart. 1964. Pavlovian concepts are fashionable today and the reprinting of these two volumes is well-timed. In them the authentic voice of an original mind triumphs over a leaden translation. The familiar material is freshened by the observations, arguments, assertions, and opinions of one of the great system-builders in neurobiology. The lectures remain necessary reading for anyone interested in the higher functions of the central nervous system and the value of the text is enhanced by Dr. Gantt's two introductory essays, one biographical and the other critical.

CONFERENCES

The annual meeting of the Scandinavian Neurosurgical Society has been cancelled for this year because of the meeting of the third International Congress of Neurological Surgery which will take place in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 23 to 27 August 1965. Further information may be obtained from the Secretariat, Dis Congress Service, 19 Sankt Peders Straede, Copenhagen K.

The first American conference on the 'Medical diagnostic application of ultrasound' will be held in the Hilton Hotel, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on 20 and 21 May 1965. Further information may be obtained from Campbell Moses, M.D., Director of Postgraduate Medicine, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 15213, U.S.A.
Book reviews

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