Book reviews


The first edition of this book appeared in 1960 and was designed to present the essentials of neurology. The material is arranged in five parts: disorders of function, disorders of anatomical regions, infections, diffuse and systemic disorders, and psychological disorders, and is handled in orthodox fashion. This second edition has been brought up to date and there are new and revised illustrations.

The most obvious feature of the text is its clarity. In his definitions, introductory remarks, and in the description of clinical tests and their interpretation the author excels: 'Vertigo may be defined as the consciousness of disordered orientation of the body in space'. 'Speech is a mode of communication by means of sounds which stand for something which may be called their meaning'. 'Dystonia is a kind of frozen athetosis characterised by distorted posture of the limbs and trunk . . . '. Clarity of thought and expression require constant insistence by clinical teachers and an introductory training in neurology is valuable in sharpening the student's mind.

The preface does not mention the general practitioner and it is clear that the author is directing his attention to the needs of students and junior hospital staff. The practitioner needs the additional assistance of a practical guide to the many common nervous complaints he has to deal with.

Criticisms are mainly minor. Some of the references are scarcely suitable (for example, those on lesions of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth cranial nerves, and on cerebral diplegia). But how nice to see that one of the two papers offered for further reading on intracranial abscess should have come from the pen of a famous British cardiologist! Although many of the illustrations are an improvement on those of the first edition there are still some which may puzzle the reader. Figure 8, p. 33, depicts the third division of the trigeminal nerve supplying the upper two-thirds of the pinna. (Cunningham's and Gray's Anatomy differ here; clinical experience supports the latter.) Plate 9c does not show the standard postero-anterior projection of a normal encephalogram but a tilted modification. Plate 13a appears to be a ventriculogram not an encephalogram. The photographic lighting in Fig. 48, p. 274, illustrating ulnar nerve paralysis of the right hand, is such that the whole of the thenar eminence looks flattened. The value of Fig. 7, illustrating the action of the ocular muscles, is limited by an inadequate explanation in the text. (What confusion there is between the normal actions of the superior oblique muscle as described by anatomists and the consequences of paralysis as seen by neurologists and ophthalmologists.) Many more instructive clinical illustrations might be profitably added to Part I; the value of histological illustrations in a book of this sort is questionable.

No mention is made of the usefulness of serum creatine kinase estimation as a routine diagnostic test in clinical and pre-clinical muscular dystrophy and in identification of female carriers of the responsible gene in the Duchenne variety. Nor is there a reminder of the danger of administering streptomycin-type antibiotics to patients with myasthenia; fatal paralysis may result from the blocking action on neuromuscular transmission. The old-fashioned and rather misleading classification of brain injuries into concussion, contusion, laceration, and compression is surprisingly retained. Post-traumatic epilepsy is insufficiently discussed. No mention is made of intravenous diphenylhydantoin in the treatment of status epilepticus.

While it is true that each generation of doctors should produce its own textbooks, in a subject like neurology there are essential basic data which will always have to be mastered. The reader will find in this book 'the hard intelligence' of neurology.

J. Spillane


This annual publication, now in its sixth volume, presents extensive review articles on experimental work bearing on neural function over a wide range of levels of the evolutionary scale. These are intended for workers active in the relevant fields of inquiry, rather than for the general reader who may find these well-documented but highly detailed accounts difficult reading.

The present volume deals with neuronal protein metabolism (Lajtha), chordate muscle innervation (Bone), the cat's visual projection system (Meikle and Sprague), electrical events in the lateral geniculate nucleus (Bishop), regeneration in the central nervous system (Clemente), the action of Sernyl (Domino), and the effects of brain stimulation on free behaviour (Delgado). The last mentioned, longest and best written review, is of the greatest interest to neurologists, in that it presents a convincing account of the neural organization of behaviour. Evidence is provided for the separate representation of 'behaviour fragments', each a motor pattern with individuality and specialized organization which may be triggered in isolation by electrical stimulation. Complex behaviour is brought about by appropriate temporal programming of behaviour fragments giving rise to a combination of acts in appropriate sequence.

M. Kinsbourne


It is through no fault of the author that this is rather an unsatisfying book because, in the absence of definitely recognizable metabolic disorder, such as diabetes insipidus or dehydration, its subject is still rather an unsatisfactory one. The body's capacity to withstand the lesser degrees of metabolic derangement is perhaps underestimated; for 'the salt and water problem', which is

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