variety of biological findings. Others hark unduly back to their authors' previously published views. Many are more technically accomplished than inspiring. Yet the book comprises a great variety of excursions, some specialized some general. Different readers will find interest in different items, and some may even find fresh starting points for exploration. But it is a book to borrow from a library, not one for the individual to buy.

R. C. OLDFIELD

The appearance of this British Medical Bulletin is timely since the field of research with which it is concerned has recently expanded with astounding rapidity. The British Council are to be congratulated on this compilation, edited by Professor P. B. Bradley, of 16 papers dealing with various aspects of the pharmacology of the central nervous system. All the contributors to this publication are experts and active workers in the specialized subject about which they are writing. There is an excellent introduction written by the late Sir John Gaddum.

This book is to some extent a Russian commentary and elaboration on the work of western physiologists, and especially those in the United States, on the diencephalon. The argument and discussion is only occasionally forced into an artificial mould by the demand to pay lip service to Pavlovian physiology. In general Russian workers seem to confirm the results of their western colleagues. However, the original work reported in the book, as opposed to opinions expressed on the work of others, falls between two stools. It is not given with sufficient factual and experimental data for independent critical assessment as would be expected in an original paper: nor is it presented in a clearly argued form with the implications and conclusions drawn as representing the considered thought of a given school. Despite this however it is interesting to know what is going on in this field in Russia.

This book, according to the publishers, is directed to 'physicians, surgeons, neurologists, psychiatrists, paediatricians, endocrinologists, and laboratory workers in the field of carbohydrate metabolism'. Furthermore we are told that the 'bibliography is selected but extends to include all the important literature on this and related topics'. In these two sentences the potential reader is warned of the weaknesses of this book. The authors would have been better advised to come down their sights on to a more selected group of readers and to have been far more critical in their selection of the literature they quote. There are in fact no fewer than 1,144 references straggling over 75 pages of text. They are not arranged in alphabetical order and are thus put effectively beyond recall. Furthermore, there is nothing more exasperating than reading a long and closely argued paragraph to be told at the end that the design of the experiments was such that the work does not merit further consideration.

These criticisms apart, the book is packed with information even though the wheat and the chaff are somewhat inextricably mixed. Nevertheless the book will surely be of value, particularly to neurologists and to those interested in clinical research in carbohydrate metabolism. The book is well produced and misprints are remarkably few, and the price, considering the excess of references, is by present day standards not outrageous.

The specialized functions of the nervous system, with the consequent heterogeneity of its structure and the variations of its cell types, both neuronal and glial, impose very obvious limits to the application of many of the methods of classical biochemistry, despite the great advances that have taken place and still are taking place as a result of their use in the study of both the normal and the diseased nervous system. By its very nature indeed the nervous system invites the application of the finer methods of modern histochemistry and cytochemistry, and the present volume provides an admirable survey of the progress that is being made in this field. The editor has widely planned this book not as a recipe book of technical methods, but rather to assess the significance and validity of histochemical methods as applied to problems of neurobiology. The book is divided into three parts, the first dealing with techniques, the second with the histochemistry of the normal nervous system, and the third with histochemistry as applied to a wide range of neuropathological problems. As one would hope in a book of this type, the myelin sheath and the many fascinating problems concerned with the processes of Wallerian degeneration and the changes occurring both in experimental allergic encephalomyelitis and in the naturally occurring demyelinating diseases are dealt with broadly and fully. There are also excellent and highly informative chapters on the cerebral storage diseases, cerebrovascular disease, anoxic brain injury, the effects of ischaemia, the retina and its diseases, and the neuromuscular junction and muscle.

The book contains a surprising amount of detailed information over a very wide front. It is well written and well edited, and the plates, figures, and diagrams are plentiful and well reproduced. It is, in short, a highly readable monograph which any investigator of the nervous system, or of its diseases, will find of real value and interest.

R. H. S. THOMPSON
Book reviews

R. H. S. Thompson

*J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* 1966 29: 586
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