work reported in the published proceedings of the two previous symposia on Current Research in Muscular Dystrophy organized by the Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain and held in 1963 and 1965 respectively. The increased size of this volume, in which the proceedings of the fourth symposium held in January 1968 are reported, pays testimony to the increased volume of work in this field now being undertaken in Great Britain.

The volume opens with the Joan Vincent Memorial Lecture, given by the Chairman of the Group, Professor F. J. Nattrass, in which he describes historical developments in medical knowledge concerning the muscular dystrophies and related disorders, and goes on to relate the remarkable progress made by the Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain since its inception. The remainder of the volume describes the contributions of individual research workers supported by financial aid from the Group. It is packed with valuable facts and information and full of useful references to the recent literature. Unfortunately some of the photographic reproductions have probably suffered as a result of the rapid off-print process used in publication. Nevertheless, the volume can be confidently recommended as giving an invaluable survey of current research into muscle diseases in Great Britain.

A CLINICAL STUDY OF MIGRAINE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE MOST SEVERE CASES By Axel Klee. (Pp. xv + 190; illustrated. Danish Kroner 50.00.) Munksgaard: Copenhagen. 1968. (Partly in English and partly in Danish.)

This monograph reviews 150 cases of migraine, 50 seen personally by the author. For inclusion in the study, migraine is taken to be ‘paroxysmal headache accompanied by marked discomfort’. ‘Severity’ both of individual attacks and of the disorder as a whole is defined: duration of attack seems to be the main criterion in each case. Correlations between severity and a number of features of migraine are then made. In general, the more diffuse definition of migraine and of severity casts some doubt on the value of this study. However, the book records a number of interesting points in the semiotics of migraine, though they are not easy to find.

C. W. M. WHITTY


This textbook is intended to cover the needs of medical students and residents, although its size—over 500 pages—hardly accords with its author’s description of it as a succinct orientation. The first section is a general consideration of the functional organization of the nervous system and of common symptoms and signs. It is admirable in conception, but the result may, in places, be a disappointment to the well-informed student of physiological knowledge. The author’s approach is traditional, didactic, and descriptive. The function of the muscle spindles in the regulation of the muscle tone is discussed in a few lines and there is confusion over conscious projection of proprioceptive sensation from muscle. The remainder of the book follows traditional lines. There is an excellent anatomical supplement of coronal brain slices and Weigert-stained sections of brain-stem which are models of clarity. The systematic descriptions of nervous system disorders are clearly set out and the illustrations, both clinical and pathological, are of excellent quality. The approach to drug therapy is practical and helpful and an unusual and informative chapter deals with neurological aspects of general medical conditions. The final pages are devoted to an index of rare syndromes with a short description of each. This is a riot of eponyms and is enough to deter the most stout-hearted student. It contains everything from Avellis syndrome to Fothergill’s neuralgia and Kojernikoff’s epilepsy, but there is no mention of writer’s cramp.

R. W. ROSS RUSSELL


This book records the proceedings of the First Migraine Symposium held at the National Hospital, Queen Square, November 1966. It contains a foreword by the Minister of Health, a history of migraine by Dr. Maconald Critchley, and a series of papers on the radiological investigation and electroencephalography of migraine, the cerebral circulation, the relation of the hypothalamus to migraine, and biochemical aspects of the subject. The object of the Symposium was to encourage research into the possible anatomical, physiological, and pharmacological mechanisms involved in the migraine attack. It is extraordinary that so little is known of the aetiology of an ailment which afflicts so many and of which the clinical aspects have been so thoroughly described over the centuries. Theories and opinions abound. There is still no agreement on the question of the personality of the migraine subject. It is hoped that intensive biochemical study of patients before, during, and after an attack, will throw some light on its causation. Epidemiological surveys of a condition which has still to be defined must have limited value.

The vascular hypothesis, which is generally accepted, began 40 years ago with the report of the efficacy of ergotamine tartrate in the relief of menstrual migraine. The metabolism of vasoactive substances and their action on receptor sites is a line of research which is being pursued.

J. D. SPILLANE


The author of this monograph attempts an explanation of the cerebral mechanisms of language, based on Barbizet’s concept of the neuronal metacircuit and Hyden’s RNA studies. He has analysed language processes according to semantic background, modality, and motor response; and has then postulated a number of theoretical systems which might control language behaviour. The scheme is coherent and stimulating; it has more
material for the neurologist than for the linguist, and provides a useful framework of reference for discussion and clinical study.


The neurologist needs no convincing of the potential importance of a clear understanding of the anatomy of the afferent parts of the nervous system, but, with a scepticism born of the disappointments of recording the evanescent and unconfirmable reports of patients in the clinic, he has allowed the arguments of the cognoscenti to flutter to and fro and made do with the elementary concept of his medical student days. It is valuable, therefore, to be reminded of the shaky foundations of our knowledge and to have the state of the play reviewed at a convenient point in time.

The factual findings are clearly separated from the theoretical interpretations. Three main theories are discussed (1) specificity, (2) duality in Head’s sense, (3) spatio-temporal patterns. While Professor Sinclair, who has contributed so much to the development of knowledge in this field, favours the pattern theory, with particular reference to the recent formulation of Melzack and Wall, it is interesting to note the resurgence of interest in the duality theory, which only a few years ago would have been dismissed as of only historical interest.

The book is well documented, methodically laid out, and beautifully produced. It will amply repay careful study and will be a frequent companion of all who have to lecture on the foundations of neurology.

J. A. SIMPSON


This volume is a collection of 15 papers from those actively engaged in Great Britain in the application of computers to medical problems. Their subjects range from the research laboratory through the diagnostic clinic to the bedside, and a helpful glossary is included so that no one need feel deterred by the jargon. The usual high standard of production is maintained and seven reviews of recent books on the subject of computers in medicine are included, so that, in all, this volume provides a complete introduction to a rapidly expanding field.

SCIENCE AND PSYCHIATRY By Brian H. Kirman. (Pp. 82. 7s. 6d.) Lawrence and Wishart: London. 1968.


The general public need have no difficulty in finding out what psychiatrists believe and do. Excellent paperbacks are available which are simply and clearly written.

Dr. Kirman’s is a good example, which has the merit of taking adequate account of mental retardation, instead of the perfunctory mention usually made of this important branch of psychiatry. He also puts much weight on the social causes and effects of mental disorder. An intentional, if tacit, bias is revealed in the cursory references to psychopathology and psychotherapy, and perhaps in the choice of title.

Dr. Willis’s little book is directed at medical students. It is dry and factual, so far as the exposition of this subject can be kept free from unconfirmed opinions. The necessity of compression is no doubt responsible for some questionable statements—for example, that Bleuler in his monograph represented thought disorder as a central feature of schizophrenia, or that chronic mania ‘does not exist’. On the whole it is remarkable how much essential information Dr. Willis has been able to squeeze into 99 crown octavo pages.


Dr. Walker believes that psychiatrists who need to be reminded to watch for physical disease in their patients will be helped in detecting and diagnosing tell-tale signs if they have at their elbow a schematic catalogue of the characteristics, treatment, and laboratory findings in each somatic disorder. The psychiatrist’s ignorance is assumed to be great; he is told what a lumbar puncture is, how to examine the mental state, and given other elementary guidance. The compressed details are reliably set out, in cram-book style, and with an occasionally odd choice of words—for example, ‘Menopause is infamous for the psychological maladjustments with which it is associated’.


Dr. Vail, who published a report on the British hospital system three years ago, next turned his experienced eye on the mental health arrangements in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. He spent 18 days in the three countries. This might be thought insufficient, but Dr. Vail is a practised assessor of public health services, he made business-like preparations for his visits, and he collected much statistical and official information which he incorporated in his book. His special interest in Scandinavian facilities and administration arises not only because of the known excellence of the psychiatric developments in these countries, but also because of the close ties between Norway and Minnesota, the state in which Dr. Vail is Director of the Department of Public Welfare. The result of his inquiries is set out in an orderly way, and provides, as he intended, a guide book, admittedly incomplete, but reliable and informative.


This book is subtitled ‘A study of the interaction between psychopathology, literature and reality in the modern world’; chapters deal with motives for space travel, the
Book reviews

J. A. Simpson

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