BOOK REVIEWS


This is the first of four volumes which will constitute the most ambitious account of the functions of the nervous system since the explosion of neurophysiological studies made one's copy of Fulton look like a relic of a bygone age. It deals with general neurophysiology in Part I—an adequate but uninspired and curiously dated account. The rest of the book is devoted to the organization of visceral functions by the autonomic nervous system, based largely on the work of Monnier himself and of his mentor W. R. Hess. Much of this work has been difficult to obtain in the English language. It is now available from an authority and will be a very valuable work of reference.

It is important to emphasize that for the Zürich school the autonomic system embraces much more than the sympathetic and parasympathetic outflow. There is a good account of the homeostatic functions of the reticular apparatus, diencephalon and rhinencephalon. Neuro-endocrinological relationships are discussed and the regulation of cerebral blood flow and CSF. One is consumed with admiration at the ability of the author to cover this field, but this inevitably means selection. Thus, it is surprising to note a brief reference to ventriculocisternal perfusion, but no account of the results obtained. The Californian studies on hypothalamic stimulation are ignored, and the role of the gamma motor neurones in respiration is not mentioned (nor is fusimotor function discussed in the section on general physiology). The account of clinical autonomic physiology is scanty and ignores much recent work. Indeed a serious criticism of the book is that it is rarely possible to be certain which species is being referred to, and whether the conclusions can be extrapolated to the human. Despite these criticisms, there is no comparable book containing so much of the type of information a neurologist or clinical neurophysiologist does not use in daily practice, but requires to have available for reference. The book is expensive, but strongly recommended for the department library.

J. A. SIMPSON


Few neurologists acquire any clear ideas regarding current research and knowledge of the functions of the basal ganglia, and, indeed, they are perforce obliged to be content with the exercise of accurate diagnosis of a considerable variety of motor and sensory syndromes. If their inclination is to probe further, then they may read with some profit the chapters in the fine Volume 6 of this new Handbook of Neurology. The severe limitations of existing knowledge are well recognized in these pages.

Thus on p. 111 Dr. Arthur Ward writes 'Unfortunately our knowledge of the detailed function of these interrelated structures is incomplete so that meaningful synthesis is not possible'.


This short but expensive book is about vertigo, and where the author restricts himself to this topic he provides an instructive and concise summary of currently accepted views. The techniques of clinical investigation are described with admirable clarity and the account of labyrinthine disorders is unexceptional. The description of related conditions is sometimes unhelpfully vague and at others quite misleading; disseminated sclerosis is characterized by 'mental and personality deterioration. progressive motor disability, convulsions, blindness and a terminal decerebrate and vegetative state'. While displaying a healthy scepticism regarding most forms of therapy, Dr. Elia gives an enthusiastic endorsement for the use of betahistidine hydrochloride. This is based on studies of microcirculation, which are in turn heralded as the key to a wide range of aetiologically obscure disorders. The practising neurologist or otologist is unlikely to find anything in this book with which he is not already familiar. It was presumably directed at a less sophisticated audience but one wonders whether they will be attracted to a book on this apparently specialized topic.

IVAN T. DRAPER


This small volume (116 pages) forms an excellent reference source. All aspects of knowledge of serotonin are reviewed, necessarily in brief. Half the book is devoted to the biochemistry and physiology of serotonin. Effects on circulatory control, intestinal motility, and central temperature control are summarized. A more detailed review of the significance of content and distribution in the brain, and of the function of serotonin as a neurotransmitter, follows. This is linked with a clear discussion of the mechanism of action of psychotropic drugs in general and of reserpine in particular. The point is well made that, while reserpine and serotonin depletion are causally related, the behavioural effects of reserpine have not been proved due to serotonin depletion. In a brief review of experimental work relating serotonin metabolism to mental disease (schizophrenia, depressive states, mental retardation) the author is guarded in his comments. A short section on serotonin antagonists follows, and there is then a brief mention of all 'states in which serotonin may be involved'. Among the conditions enumerated and a little discussed are carcinoid tumour, dumping syndrome, migraine.

The volume closes with 18 pages of references.

J. M. HOCKADAY
Book Reviews

Ivan T. Draper

J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1969 32: 363
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