

Book reviews

CLINICAL NEUROSURGERY Edited by Barnes Wordall. Vol. 18. (Pp. 557; illustrated; £8.25.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1971.

CLINICAL NEUROSURGERY Edited by G. T. Tindall. Vol. 19. (Pp. 598; illustrated; £12.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1972.

The Congress of Neurosurgeons began in 1951 on the initiative of a group of younger neurosurgeons. In the last 20 years its membership has grown from 69 to over 1,000, but it has retained its original intentions and virility by a constitution which ensured that the office bearers and organizers were always young men. Residents in training are encouraged to join, financial concessions make it possible for them to attend meetings, and these are organized as an educational exercise, by inviting established authorities to give lectures on selected topics, chosen to provide a balanced programme. As a result *Clinical Neurosurgery* is a valuable volume which all neurosurgeons look forward to each year; it is in quite a different class from the usual conference tome, full of brief and unconnected papers of widely varying quality. As the title suggests *Clinical Neurosurgery* includes excellent clinical reviews but the two recent volumes include also a section of seminars on fundamental research—in volume 18 on coma and sleep, in volume 19 on basic mechanisms of memory. It is also the custom to invite a senior neurosurgical citizen as guest of honour and his two or three papers afford an opportunity for historical and philosophical reflections as well as an experienced perspective on clinical and experimental work. Add to this the refreshing presidential address, from one of the (angry?) young men of neurosurgery and it will be clear that these volumes really do include something of interest for every neurosurgeon, whatever his own interests or prejudices. It is a relief to be able so warmly to recommend these books, when the question posed by so many other books is whether anyone would really want to read them. The most recent volume has a more consistent theme than former ones, and that is 'head injury'. It includes papers on mechanisms as revealed by animal experiment and by a pathologist who visited the scene of the accident before examining the brains of head injury fatalities. There are chapters on engineering and socio-psychological aspects of accident prevention, as well as down to earth clinical accounts of metabolic disorders, testing for acoustic vestibular

damage, and aspects of prognosis. This is a significant contribution to the literature on head injury.

BRYAN JENNETT

CLINICAL ASPECTS OF DEMENTIA By J. Pearce and E. Millar. (Pp. 142; £3.) Balliere, Tindall: London. 1973.

The problems presented to society by steadily increasing numbers of old people are probably more closely connected with their emotional difficulties and failing intellect than with their decreasing physical powers. The medical profession is devoting increasing amounts of time to this field of interest, but the need for informed clinical and psychological assessments of the elderly has never been greater. Moreover, much more attention is required to the basic physical changes occurring in the ageing brain. In their book the authors of *Clinical Aspects of Dementia* highlight these needs. Their approach, though primarily clinical, includes observations upon pathological aspects of dementia, and upon psychological evaluation of the old person. The book is ideal for undergraduates and postgraduates in psychiatry, but in parts, may fall short of the needs of those in clinical neurology or neurosurgery. Although short, it contains a full bibliography for the reader who wishes to delve further into this fascinating subject.

MICHAEL R. BOND

THE WORKING BRAIN (AN INTRODUCTION TO NEUROPSYCHOLOGY) By A. R. Luria. (Pp. 371; illustrated; £2.50.) Allen Lane: London. 1973.

I found this book fascinating and irritating. The analysis of higher mental functions into component parts was convincing. Similarly the synthesis of the individual elements into complex executive action seemed reasonable. These descriptions provide a base for imaginative investigation of the patient and propose models which are an aid to the understanding of cerebral function in health and disease. However, the transfer of theory to the structure of the brain is less satisfying.

One of the apparent aims of this essay is to correlate the separate elements of mental function with precise cortical localization. In the practical terms of patient management, such localization is not only inaccurate but is often irrelevant. Pathological conditions not only affect the cortex but also involve the



CLINICAL NEUROSURGERY

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