BOOK REVIEWS

AN INTRODUCTION TO PHYSICAL METHODS OF TREATMENT IN PSYCHIATRY

William Sargent and Eliot Slater
(E. & S. Livingstone, Edinburgh. 1944. Pp. 171. 8s. 6d.)

In this short book, which is the first of its kind to appear, the authors have described the various physical treatments for psychiatric disorders which have been developed in the last 20 years. Much of the working principles and details that are provided, are not otherwise available in book form. The insulin treatment of schizophrenia, convulsion therapy, continuous narcosis, prefrontal leucotomy, and malarial therapy provide half the subject matter, and are described in a lucid manner, with plenty of practical guidance in technique which will prove invaluable to the student coming to psychiatry from a general medical training. The authors describe the indications for each treatment, the results that can be expected with suitable selection, the technique and the risks involved. They emphasize the importance of early insulin treatment for the schizophrenic and by quoting the relevant figures from the New York State hospitals, may, we hope, discourage the continued use in these cases of convulsion therapy. The latter is the treatment of involutional depression in which a 70-90 per cent, chance of rapid recovery is offered. Physical treatment during the fit is favoured, and a form of strait-jacket for this purpose is described. It is emphasized that the uses of sleep therapy have been reduced by the introduction of specific treatments for schizophrenia and the depressive states, and the authors consider its chief use to be in manic states and in any very agitated patient as a preliminary to a specific therapy. It is most valuable in the acute anxiety states of war, but in general it is to be regarded as a form of psychiatric first aid and nothing more.

The emphasis laid on diet and fluid intake for the narcosis patient and on the constitutional approach which led to the development of modified insulin treatment for the exhausted neurotic, recalls the Weir-Mitchell type of insulin therapy may well find a place in general medicine. The chapter on the uses of intravenous barbiturate adds nothing new to an already familiar technique, but the advice that "a cautious and sceptical attitude will save the doctor from swallowing all of his patient's hocus, hunting Snarks, and exploring nightmare's nests" is timely.

The discussion on diet, vitamins, and endocrines, although containing many practical therapeutic suggestions, is unfortunately diffuse and badly laid out. It is hoped that in a later edition this will be revised. It would appear preferable to deal with the administration of thyroid extract in this chapter rather than under "chemical stimulation." In giving a chapter the title "Treatment of cerebral dysrhythmia," the authors have boldly followed the Harvard school of electro-encephalography, though they admit that it is the fits or the behaviour disorder that are treated and that the dysrhythmia frequently remains unchanged while the patient improves. Although stimulating, as a guide to the treatment of epilepsy, this chapter could be greatly improved.

The authors support their book by an introduction, which is an excellent résumé of the theory of constitutional psychiatry, and by a final chapter which is perhaps an attempt to mollify the psychotherapists. But here psycho-analysis and all forms of "depth" therapy find little support. The authors conclude that "the somatic approach is only capable of improving the instrument that is in our hands; psychotherapy may have something to say of the aim towards which it is directed." Many will disagree with this and with other instances when a mechanistic behaviourism is assumed. However, in the main the authors have achieved what they attempted. This book is not academic. Even though it was written for the student and young clinician, some references and a bibliography would have been helpful. The style, always readable, is at times colloquial. Yet it is stimulating and is infused with an obvious therapeutic enthusiasm that is rare among the exponents of constitutional psychiatry. Undoubtedly it will be of great value to the post-graduate student. It is to be hoped that a second edition will follow in which greater attention is paid to those chapters which, admittedly, present the greatest difficulties.

A TEXT BOOK OF PSYCHIATRY FOR STUDENTS AND PRACTITIONERS

D. K. Henderson and R. D. Gillespie

This book is probably the best known work on psychiatry by British authors, and represents for the most part the standard teaching in this country. So much regarding the exact mechanism of mental disorder is unknown, that it is a pleasure to read a book on the subject which is completely free from dogma and oversimplification. At the same time the authors have succeeded in presenting the subject in a lucid manner with a minimal use of less familiar phraseology. The book is thus especially suitable for those wishing to acquire sound fundamentals in this branch of medicine.

Important new features of this edition include discussions on pre-frontal leucotomy and electric shock therapy. That bilateral division of the fronto-thalamic fibres in selected cases of mental disorder is frequently followed by extremely beneficial results is no longer to be doubted, but it is clear that the operation has limited indications, and in a few cases unfortunate results. The present view is expressed that the pure observational states are likely to respond the most favourably, whilst those states characterized by hallucinations are less benefited; but that neither is a real indication for surgery unless every other method of treatment has failed, and considerable occupational disability has resulted.

The text has been re-arranged to some extent, a noticeable alteration being the inclusion of the so-called paranoid forms of schizophrenia with paranoic and paranoid reaction-types as hitherto. Many will share the authors' view that this conception has advantages, particularly with regard to prognosis.

The chapter on psychosis and psycho-neurosis in war is detailed enough, and will prove useful to the serving doctor.

NEUROLOGY OF THE EYE, EAR, NOSE AND THROAT

E. A. Spiegel and I. Sommer
(Grune and Stratton, New York. 1944. Pp. 667)

There is need for a book or books which present the facts, so far as they are known, concerning the borderland between neurology, oto-laryngology and ophthalmology. The authors are to be congratulated on a well-documented book which goes far to fill this need. It is indeed helpful to those seeking knowledge that the authors have not only provided a very full list of
REFERENCES AT THE END OF THE BOOK, BUT HAVE ALSO INDICATED AT THE END OF EACH CHAPTER THE MORE IMPORTANT WORKS ON THE SUBJECT DEALT WITH. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THIS BOOK WILL BE WELCOMED BY MANY AND ACCEPTED AS A TEXT-BOOK, WORTHY OF STUDY, IN THE FIELDS OF NEUROLOGY, OTOLARYNGOLOGY AND OPHTHALMOLOGY.

IT IS PUBLISHED IN CLEAR TYPE. THE REPRODUCTIONS ARE ON THE WHOLE GOOD AND THE X-RAY PICTURES ARE OF SUFFICIENT CLARITY FOR THE ABNORMALITIES TO BE READILY SEEN. THE LIST OF REFERENCES, 1719 IN ALL, IS COMPREHENSIVE AND THE INDEX ADEQUATE. THIS IS A BOOK WORTHY OF COMMENDATION.

RECENT ADVANCES IN NEUROLOGY AND NEURO-Psychiatry

W. Russell Brain and E. B. Strauss


In a somewhat extensive preface the authors give a dissertation on their reasons for adjusting the title of this book to that of "Recent Advances in Neurology and Neuro-Psychiatry". It is indeed difficult to understand or follow their argument for the inclusion of "neuro-psychiatry". Their reference to the part played by the autonomic system in hormone regulation and their following statement of the consequent necessity that neurology and psychiatry must overlap are surely open, if not to criticism, to considerable misunderstanding. And if they state "the whole of the book is neuro-psychiatric" then why include neurology in the title? As the book contains much about neuro-physiology, neuro-surgery and neuro-pathology, should these subdivisions of neurology be left out of the title? The new title is indeed unfortunate.

There is no doubt that the authors are to be congratulated in presenting in a readable and concise form the recently acquired knowledge as is to be found in journals published throughout the world. Their assessment of the importance of the various contributions is, however, on occasion open to question. Is it indeed a fact that prefrontal leucotomy may be looked upon as a cure for "biogenetic psychoses and psycho-neurotic reaction formations"? A more critical approach to this subject is surely still necessary. Even the authors themselves in their summary of this chapter on prefrontal leucotomy state that this form of therapy is justifiable when other forms of treatment have failed and when neurological aspects have been weighed up. This does not appear to substantiate their statement in the introduction to this chapter. In the chapter on electrical convulsant therapy does the inclusion of a photograph of the apparatus add useful information? It cannot be said that the photograph is helpful either to the clinician in assessing the value of the therapy or to the expert in obtaining the layout of the circuits.

In the chapter on disorders of muscle there is an excellent description of the muscular disorders associated with thyroid disease and a fair survey has been given of the value of thymectomy in myasthenia gravis. The following chapter deals with sciatica and the authors take the view that this condition is caused by one of a number of pathological conditions. There will be many neurologists who will hesitate to accept the term "sciatica" as covering many of the conditions listed. The authors draw attention to the advisable need for caution in assessing the results of operation in the treatment of patients with a herniated intravertebral disc.

This is a useful book to act as an introduction and guide to the recent additions to literature in the field of neurology. It should not, however, replace or deter the study of the original papers.

Neuro-Ophthalmology

Donald J. Lyle

(Chas. C. Thomas, Springfield, Ill. 1945. Pp. 395. $10.50)

In the preface the author may be interpreted as indicating that his book is written mainly for the purpose of helping the ophthalmologist when requested to consult with neurological colleagues. The danger, therefore, to which the author may submit himself when he attempts to cover the two specialties—ophthalmology and neurology—is that neurologists are dealt with in a manner satisfying to the critically interested medical man in either.

In nineteen chapters a very wide field is covered from the embryological development of the neural elements of the eye through a somewhat short survey of the physiology of vision to several chapters concerned with diseases of the nervous system. The reviewer finds himself in difficulties in assessing the merits of a book so arranged. He regrets that a more adequate presentation of the anatomy and physiology of vision, especially that of the peripheral fields, has not been included. It is indeed difficult either by reading the book or referring to the index to find out the character of the field defects which may be met with in small focal lesions in the region of the calcaneous fissure. Profusely illustrated, especially with stereographs of the fundus, with clinical photographs and with photographs of brain dissections and pathological specimens, these photographs do not replace a well-written description of many conditions. Is a picture of an anencephalic child helpful or needed? Does a picture of a child in the last stages of amaurotic family idiocy show anything but a wasted child? Do X-ray reproductions which reveal little or no detail add value to the book? These are questions which the reviewer hesitates to answer in the affirmative.

There is, however, collected in this book information which should be readily available to ophthalmologists and accordingly this book may find approval. It is, however, uncertain whether neurologists will agree that the book fills a want. Possibly the editor, as the author may see his way to reduce the number of photographs, to lengthen the text and to improve the index.

DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

F. M. R. Walshe


This is a fourth edition, an indication of the popularity of this textbook on diseases of the nervous system. The author in the past has taken advantage of each new edition to revise and amplify again he has done so. This edition has benefited by the alterations and additions made to the text.

In view of the interest displayed by physicians and surgeons in the part possibly played by disturbances of the autonomic nervous system in various disease conditions, the absence of a short statement as to the function of and signs arising from disturbance of the autonomic nervous system is disappointing. The autonomic nervous system is referred to neither in the chapter on anatomical or localizing factors, nor in that on examination of the nervous system.

It remains a textbook worthy of recommendation to student and practitioner.

THE EXAMINATION OF REFLEXES

Robert Wartenberg

(The Year Book Publishers, Chicago, 1945. Pp. 222. $2.50.)

A student may well be persuaded to find a book of 182 pages devoted entirely to the examination of reflexes. The merit of this book is not so much in the description of the many reflexes mentioned as in the author's insistence that many supposedly different reflexes are in fact not infrequently one and the same reflex. He has helped to clear away much unnecessary superstitions which sometimes clouded the proper interpretation of abnormalities of reflex activity. For this reason the student of neurology might well benefit from reading this book.