SOCIETY OF BRITISH NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS

The thirty-second Meeting of the Society was held at the Canadian Neurological and Facio-Maxillary Hospital at Hackwood Park on 4th November, 1944, under the presidency of Mr. Norman Dott. The Meeting was attended by well over 100 visitors, including consultant representatives of all the British and Canadian Services and a large contingent of U.S. Army neuro-surgeons. Lt.-Col. E. H. Botterell, R.C.A.M.C., introduced the day’s discussions on the treatment of battle casualties. Twelve papers were read, most of which have already been published or are in process of publication in Canadian, American and British journals.

BOOK REVIEWS.

THE SHAPING OF PSYCHIATRY BY WAR

J. R. Rees

(London. Chapman and Hall, Ltd. Pp. 158. 10s. 6d.)

From these lectures a fair notion can be obtained of the spirit which has informed the activities of the psychiatrists of the British Army. Brigadier Rees, who moulded the shape of these activities, succeeds in putting on paper much of his convictions and experience of psychiatry in wartime, as well as the philosophy behind his constant efforts to develop an active and pervasive branch of the medical services. The first part of the book describes the steps and methods whereby the aims he set before himself were attained in the Army, and the latter part outlines the ways in which this might be applied in civil life, if the author’s hopes were to be realised. These hopes, broadly painted in the final chapter of the book, are resumed in an appendix: they cover industry, selection for the professions, education, crime, social inquiry, and planning. Under this last head, the author, in the closing words of his book, insists that wartime experience has made it quite clear that the psychiatric contribution to social and political planning of the future is at least as important as any other, given the right kind of psychiatrists to make it. The successes which Dr. Rees records, in broad outline, in the earlier part of the book prevent even the sceptical reader from discounting such beliefs and hopes as the dreams of an unpractical enthusiast. There are, however, many passages which will make such readers regret that wartime restrictions have made it impossible for the author to give the evidence for his more sweeping statements—the more so, since his style, urbane and temperate though it mainly is, slips occasionally into over-protestations, such as: “without any question the value of the psychologist in war has been demonstrated so clearly that in peace there will be no question that his help will be demanded.”

But to most readers the book will offer a telling picture of the varied and expanding work which, under Dr. Rees’s guidance and impetus, the psychiatrists in the Army were called on to perform.

TEXTBOOK OF MEDICINE

Edited by J. J. Conybeare


In this textbook of medicine 224 pages of a total of 1138 are devoted to diseases of the nervous system. Following several opening pages given to a description of the general symptomatology of organic nervous diseases, the author passes to a series of admirable sketches of the symptomatology, signs and treatment of the various diseases affecting the nervous system. Undue prominence is not given to the rare diseases, yet sufficient information is available for the keen student. It is of interest to note that surgical interference, apart from alcohol injection in the treatment of trigeminal neuralgia, receives no high recommendation and little is said of partial root section as a therapeutic measure. It is indeed unfortunate that in the section allocated to the aetiology of myasthenia gravis the diagnostic test of injection of “prostigmin”, a solid substance, is referred to as “four cubic centimetres of prostigmin with 1/100 gr. of atropine sulphate”. Later the therapeutic doses are given in milligrammes. According to the makers this substance is supplied either in ampoules of 1 c.c. containing 0.5 mg., or in phials of 5 c.c., each c.c. containing 2.5 mg. The variability of the spelling of “prostigmin” is regrettable.

There is no doubt that the section on nervous diseases is good, adequate, comprehensive and well balanced.