Reviews and Notices of Books.


A monograph of this kind is sure to prove useful to other practitioners of medicine besides the neurologist, seeing that the obstetrician encounters cases of birth injury at the outset, while the pediatrician and the orthopaedist meet them at later stages. It is paradoxically unfortunate that the subject is one which interests these various specialists, inasmuch as it may appear rather to fall between two stools (more, indeed). There can be little question that the onus in this respect lies with the obstetrician, for if anything is to be done when birth injuries declare themselves it is best to have it done quickly. Thus in not a few instances the problem presents also a surgical aspect.

One of the features of interest in the book is the attention it gives to the variety of the factors producing or responsible for what are usually termed birth "injuries"; as has long been recognised by those who are familiar with the subject, actual injury is but one of several factors, among which antenatal infection is without doubt prominent. Notwithstanding the care devoted to this part of the book, it may be questioned whether a satisfactory exposition of the phenomena has been given. Diplegia is on the face of it a semiological term; it means simply double "plegia"—double or bilateral (usually spastic) paralysis is what the clinician takes it to signify. Thus there can be no disease or nosological entity such as diplegia, convenient though the expression is. If we mistake not, however, the author of this section would prefer not to make diplegia stand for all bilateral paralyses of cerebral origin; he says, "we must admit that it is possible for symmetrically placed lesions over the convexity near the midline to simulate the clinical picture of cerebral diplegia exactly." In our view these do not simulate the diplegic picture; they form it. They are a genuine cause of diplegia. Dr. Ford maintains that the commonest cause of diplegia as he understands the term is "atrophy of lobar sclerosis," following Collier in this respect, but we find no reference to the recent cogent criticisms of the latter's opinion by B. Sachs. We may ask, indeed, what is the cause of "lobar atrophic sclerosis"? It cannot be held to constitute a unique pathological condition, being itself the result of differing morbid agents. Thus ascription of diplegia largely to it does not solve the pathological problem. The author also seeks to distinguish "true diplegia" from double hemiplegia as though this were a plausible clinical procedure; but no criterion can be applied to differentiate which will hold good for all cases.
The second part of the book contains equally interesting and possibly less well recognised facts in respect of the causation of spinal injuries at birth. There are references at the end of each section, but unfortunately no index.

S. A. K. W.


To his volume entitled Personality, Dr. Gordon has written a companion one, dealing on a larger scale with the neurotic personality, and analysing along interesting lines the components in the 'make-up' of that individual or clinical type. Semiology and treatment are examined in considerable detail, and the opportunity is taken of summarising and criticising various current practices in respect of the latter, and of discussing the pathological physiology of the former.

From the nosological standpoint much space is given to anxiety states, obsessions, and hysteria, and investigation here is especially careful and often illuminating, even if open to modification in several particulars. The phenomenon of defective inhibition of the antagonists deserves more consideration as a frequent hysterical motor symptom or sign than is given it. Various trophic and vascular changes accompanying hysterical phenomena are stated to be secondary, "not themselves hysterical," and dependent simply on "immobility and disuse." To this conclusion there are obvious objections; the part played by the neurovascular system in the actual manifestation of hysterical symptoms cannot be gainsaid. The author holds that anxiety states are "the invariable accompaniment of conflict within the personality," but we may ask whether he has considered the possibility of identical syndromes arising at other levels. Is "epilepsy" of bulbar centres inconceivable? And what of repercussion from structurally diseased viscera on these bulbar centres? These conditions are clinically indistinguishable from "anxiety states" yet have a different etiology.

The book is stimulating because there is much in it that is suggestive rather than established; this accounts to some extent at least for the probability that it will teach the reader most if he preserves himself an open mind in regard to not a few interpretations and conclusions. It is well written in a lucid style and has a wide appeal.

A number of slips seem to have escaped notice. "An hysterical" this or that pulls up the reader too often, and we may remind Dr. Gordon that Dejerine spelt his name without accents and that "Korsikoff" is a mis-spelling. "Anorhexia" is also a slip that needs correction.
Birth Injuries of the Central Nervous System
S. A. K. W.

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