Book reviews

TUMOURS OF THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM By L. J.

Rubinstein. (Pp. 400; illustrated; \$11.75.) Armed Forces Institute of Pathology: Washington. 1972. This is a splendid book, and one which maintains the high standards that clinicians and pathologists alike routinely expect of every fascicle of the *Atlas of Tumour Pathology* published by the AFIP. Dr. Rubinstein now presents us with an authoritative account of tumours of the central nervous system, and he incorporates many observations on their ultrastructure, treatment, prognosis, and differential diagnosis. There are also sections on the general biological characteristics of tumours of neurogenic origin, on the changes brought about by irradiation, and on the more important diagnostic aids including brief accounts of rapid diagnostic methods (smears, frozen sections, and cryostat-unfixed sections) and spinal fluid cytology. The fascicle is lavishly illustrated, and the quality of the black and white reproductions is excellent. One might question if many of the colour plates are any more informative than the monochromes: they would certainly not be worth incorporating if they materially increased the cost of production but no one is likely to object to the price of this fascicle.

The opinions expressed in this book are in essence similar to those in the until now indispensable Russell and Rubinstein—indeed one wonders what effect this fascicle will have on future editions of the latter. There are some points that differ, usually mainly in emphasis, but there are some fairly striking changes in the classification of astrocytomas. Dr. Rubinstein now lays much greater emphasis on the term *diffuse* in describing astrocytoma: this is a reasonable step, although some neuropathologists may still prefer to restrict the term to tumours that do not quite warrant inclusion in the category of gliomatosis cerebri. There is not a section dealing specifically with anaplastic astrocytomas, although it is of course said that any diffuse astrocytoma may become anaplastic. The intriguing point is that Dr. Rubinstein introduces a section entitled 'malignant astrocytoma', a tumour with features that fall short of those of glioblastoma multiforme. Unlike the authors of the earlier fascicle on tumours of the central nervous system, Dr. Rubinstein has never supported the grading of astrocytomas 1–4 on the basis of ascending degrees of malignancy, and I agree with him in this, but it could be argued that he now

accepts four grades of astrocytoma—diffuse astrocytoma, anaplastic change in diffuse astrocytoma, malignant astrocytoma, and glioblastoma multiforme. This is not precisely what he says, since he defines differentiating features, but it could be interpreted thus. This amended terminology will probably not be welcomed by surgeons and radiotherapists, but I find it sensible and acceptable if only to emphasize that in a tumour with such a wide spectrum as astrocytoma, rigid lines cannot be drawn between subtypes.

Much more could be said. I approve of the rather ugly compromise term 'reticulum cell sarcoma—microglioma' if it will bring to an end the battle of semantics that has been waged over this tumour for many years. I doubt if I approve of the comment that Figures 195 and 196 are the same type of meningioma: Dr. Rubinstein does comment in the legend that the tumour illustrated in Figure 196 is sometimes designated as haemangiopericytoma. I have no particular liking for this term either, but there is, I think, an ever increasing body of opinion that there are two distinct types of angioblastic meningioma.

I can only end as I began by saying that this is a splendid and eminently readable book. The pathologist will use it as a standard reference book. The clinician could hardly fail to benefit from browsing in it.

J. HUME ADAMS

AUTONOMIC NEUROMUSCULAR TRANSMISSION By

M. R. Bennett. (Pp. 274; illustrated; £7.60.)

Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 1972.

It is only in recent years that clinicians have begun to pay attention to the autonomic nervous system and to autonomic disorders which occur in patients with neurological disease. This book on neuromuscular transmission in the autonomic nervous system is therefore particularly opportune. It is clearly written, but, nevertheless, is not light reading for those not primarily concerned with neuromuscular transmission, and the frequent summaries giving the author's appraisal of the evidence he has quoted are particularly valuable. Unlike the somatic motor system, the muscular effector in the autonomic nervous system is not a single muscle fibre but a smooth muscle bundle in which there is electrical coupling between the cells of the bundle. An action potential therefore spreads along the bundle and may also