MIGRAINE: EVOLUTION OF A COMMON DISORDER By Oliver Sacks. (Pp. 220; illustrated; £1.60.) Faber and Faber: London. 1973.

This is a second and slightly shortened edition of the work published in 1971. It brings a fresh approach to the subject by viewing it in biological rather than limited medical terms. Under the heading 'the experience of migraine', the enormous variety of signs and symptoms which can constitute an attack are discussed. This is a valuable collection of clinical experience. It provides not only descriptions of the established varieties of migraine, but also examples of the diagnostic borderlands, the migraine equivalents. In a second section entitled 'The occurrence of migraine' the factors which induce an attack are considered. The author sees these as essential biological situations, not simply as limited environmental factors, whether internal or external; though these must play their part. He also disputes the importance of genetic factors, pointing out alternative explanations even when migraine clearly runs in families. In a last section on 'therapeutic approaches', specific drug treatment, both preventative and curative of a given attack, is discussed. The author emphasizes particularly the value of psychotherapy. His general viewpoint is in many ways Meyerian psychobiology brought up to date.

This book is a useful clinical treatise on migraine. It also displays a facility of exposition and an appreciation of the wider values of life which make it educative and entertaining reading.

C. W. M. WHITTY

THE SURGERY OF THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM By D. W. C. Northfield. (Pp. 884; illustrated; £22.50.) Blackwell: Oxford. 1973.

The appearance of this book, written by one of the world's leading neurosurgeons, has been eagerly awaited, ever since it was known that such a volume was being prepared. With characteristic precision and clarity, qualities which are apparent on every page, the author describes this work as a textbook for postgraduate students. He tells us in his preface how he himself sought in vain for a book which would guide him at the time of his first apprenticeship in neurological surgery 40 years ago. Today's trainees in this field will have cause to be grateful for Mr Northfield's perception of this lack, for his skill in accumulating his material, and for his massive industry in producing this work. Colleagues in related disciplines have assisted in its preparation, but this is essentially a one-author book. The emphasis throughout is on basic scientific principles, pathology, careful clinical examination, and evaluation of current methods of treatment. Descriptions of the technical minutiae of operative surgery are

deliberately omitted but there are helpful accounts of the main steps in the operations practised by the author. There are numerous illustrations, some in colour. At the end of each chapter is a very full list of references. Although the book is designed primarily for those entering upon a career in neurosurgery, it will surely also become a standard work of reference for doctors practising in other fields. Despite its high price this volume is excellent value for money. It is a credit to all that is best in British surgery, and deserves to be widely read.

P. R. R. CLARKE

ANAESTHESIE MIT GAMMA-HYDROXYBUTTERSÄURE By W. Bushart and P. Rittmeyer. (Pp. 93; illustrated; \$8.90.) Springer: Berlin, Heidelberg, New York. 1973.

A colloquium on experimental and clinical aspects of anaesthesia with gamma-hydroxybutyric acid was held at Hamburg-Eppendorf in October 1970. The importance of avoiding side-effects by the use of other drugs is again stressed. In spite of evidence of stimulating effects on the central nervous system, it is emphasized that this drug is a genuine anaesthetic agent. Although there is agreement that an increase in central stimuli occurs, it is felt that these originate in the brain-stem and that the cerebral cortex is inhibited. Both these drugs may have some use where a single agent is desirable—for example, in repeated anaesthesia for burns dressings. The impression is given, however, that both should be avoided in neurosurgical anaesthesia.

JOHN BARKER

BIOCHEMISTRY, ULTRASTRUCTURE AND PHYSIOLOGY OF CEREBRAL ANOXIA, HYPOXIA AND ISCHEMIA Edited by M. M. Cohen. MONOGRAPHS IN NEURAL SCIENCES, Vol. 1. (Pp. 129; illustrated; price not stated.) Karger: Basel. 1973.

This short monograph contains chapters on the biochemistry, cerebral ultrastructure and neurophysiological effects of experimental hypoxia and ischaemia of the brain. It is a report of a 'workshop' reviewing progress to which is added a lecture by H. McIlwain on the consequences of cerebral hypoxia examined at a tissue-metabolic level. The book contains little new material and the section on cerebral ultrastructure is disappointing, but as a whole, the book is a useful review of non-clinical literature.

J. A. SIMPSON

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