cations subsequently proposed by Gardner-Medwin and Walton in 1974.

The clinical section contains a useful review of the annual incidence of various neuropathies in different countries. In general, however, this section lacks balance and certain subjects receive disproportionate emphasis at the expense of others. For example, several pages are devoted to rare inherited conditions such as abetalipoproteinaemia, Fabry's syndrome and Refsum's disease, whereas clinical aspects of common neuropathies (Guillain-Barré syndrome, leprosy) receive cursory treatment. (There is, for example, no mention of thickened nerves in the clinical account of neural leprosy.) The few pages devoted to mechanical and traumatic nerve lesions do not do justice to the subject; if more detailed treatment was not possible, it might have been wiser to have omitted this section.

RW GILLIATT

Neuropsychiatric Features of Medical Disorders. By James W Jefferson and John R Marshall. (Pp 383; £24.50.) London; Plenum Medical Book Company, 1981.

Liaison psychiatry was the vogue speciality of the sixties and seventies, displacing psychosomatic medicine, a discredited hybrid with a penchant for facile theorising that betrayed all too clearly its origins in psychoanalytical dogma. The earliest tests displayed all of the wide eyed enthusiasm of the freshly converted. The contribution that psychiatrists might make to medicine was explored with an almost Messianic zeal. Recent publications strike a more cautionary note. There is an awareness that a conventional psychiatric training (and this is particularly true of the United States) may leave the specialist ill-equipped to deal with the technicalities of general medicine. This concern is evident throughout this book. The authors, who are both psychiatrists with extensive general hospital experience, state their aims clearly in the preface: to acquaint their readers more fully with the neuropsychiatric aspects of physical illness and medical drugs. It is important to be clear what the book is not about. It does not concern itself with neuropsychiatric symptoms that are manifestations of primary brain disease or dysfunction; nor with the neurological side effects of psychotropic drugs. Stress-related somatic syndromes of a functional nature such as spastic colon receive no

more attention than is necessary to gauge the importance of their contribution to the differential diagnosis of authentic organic disorders. Such self-imposed restrictions seem entirely reasonable: these areas have already been covered by standard and highly acclaimed text books. How well does the book succeed? One major difficulty is that it is not easy to describe the neuropsychiatric symptoms of a disorder without first summarising the condition itself. As a consequence it reads rather like a potted version of an undergraduate medical text book. Another problem is the ubiquitous but somewhat unvarying nature of psychiatric symptoms as they accompany physical disease. Anxiety, irritability and fatigue make their appearance page after page and have relatively little specific diagnostic value. This cannot be helped but hardly makes for easy reading. The allocation of space is at times rather arbitrary. If there is any overriding principle it often seems that the more obscure the subject the more attention it gets. Thus disorders associated with disturbed magnesium metabolism get five pages, organophosphate poisoning four. In contrast alcohol related problems are accounted for in four pages and thiamine deficiency in three. Coverage is often variable. Male erectile impotence is dealt with in detail, ejaculatory impotence barely mentioned and female sexual dysfunction ignored completely. Many somatic syndromes of probable psychogenic origin, for example, low back pain chronic prostatism, receive no mention.

These criticisms notwithstanding it remains a useful reference book and any well endowed Department of Psychiatry with a foothold in a general hospital would do well to have it on its library shelves. Sections on endocrine disorder, fluid-electrolyte disturbance, vitamin disorders and toxins are particularly thorough. At £24.50p it cannot, however, be regarded as value for money for the individual buyer.

BRIAN TOONE

Depression. The Facts. By George Winokur. (Pp 166; £5.95.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

This book is mainly written for sufferers from depression and for their relatives but is also addressed to nurses, social workers, ministers of religion, and other professional workers who are likely to meet people suffering from depression.

To deal satisfactorily with a topic for such a wide and diverse readership is a difficult task for anyone to undertake.

The book deals with many aspects of depression but stresses the biological factors and approaches to treatment, dealing with some of them at length and in detail. For the lay reader the rather hasty dismissal of unhappiness as a matter unrelated to the real subject matter of the book, "depression . . . a clinical state often requiring intervention", will be surprising and not entirely comprehensible. The lay reader's problem in comprehension will be compounded by the detailed chapter on classification of the major disorders. The treatment of some topics is in such detail it will be of value to postgraduate students of psychiatry but other important and relevant topics are dealt with scantily and others omitted. Here lie the main weaknesses of the book; it is too idiosyncratic in its opinions to be so dogmatic; the level at which topics are considered is very variable; and little advice is given on the management of the more common types of unhappiness including bereavement. Style in writing is a matter of preference; but for me the author's rather confident, racy style is unsuitable for the material he presents.

This book is disappointing, and has suffered in being prepared for too wide a readership; it is not successful in satisfactorily meeting the needs of any particular group. I hope the author will try again as his experience and distinguished research in the field make him eminently suitable to be the author of an authoritative book on depressive disorders for a lay readership.

RHS MINDHAM

Peptides of the pars intermedia. Ciba Foundation Symposium 81. (Pp 300; £19.50.) London: Pitman Medical, 1981.

This is the published account of a Ciba Symposium on the intermediate lobe of pituitary held in June 1980 under the chairmanship of Michael Besser. It is an outstandingly good review of the structure, chemistry and physiologic functions of this mysterious part of the endocrine system. Changes in colour have always been of major interest in biology. The role of the pituitary gland in endocrinology was first indicated not by a study of growth but by the independent observation of Smith and Allen in 1916 that