BOOK REVIEWS


Neuropathology has advanced rapidly in the past two decades, and these advances have often had direct clinical relevance. This new and up-to-date textbook will thus be equally welcome to physiology students and to clinical neurologists. The author is well aware of the clinical implications of his subject matter and draws on clinical material to illustrate his argument where appropriate. A separate chapter on the applied physiology of pain by Dr. John Marshall adds to its value. The book is written in a pleasant and lucid style and is happily free from "scientific journalese". It gives a refreshing impression of analysing the nervous system in the activities of everyday life. The mention in the text of a main reference source to certain subjects is useful; in addition, a full list of references to "classical" and modern papers is given at the end.


The subject matter of clinical neurology has a more direct link with its basic sciences than have some other branches of medicine, and advances in these sciences therefore call for rapid integration with clinical work. This makes it more difficult to keep text-books up to date and enhances the value of such books as this which review modern trends. It also allows editors and contributors to be selective and to emphasize what they consider currently important aspects of their subject. The present volume fulfills both these functions admirably. Its 24 chapters deal with physiological, biochemical, and cytochemical problems as well as those of pathogenesis and more purely clinical medicine. Professor Lumsden's description of the dynamics of myelin maintenance and the activities of oligodendrocytes are particularly interesting, both in their own right and for their relevance to the problems of demyelinating diseases, sensitization phenomena in the nervous system, and virus invasion, all of which are discussed by various authors. Dr. Nathan's succinct review of modern knowledge of the inter-connexions of thalamus, hypothalamus, and cortex is useful. Professor Meyer does much to put into proper perspective recent work on local lesions in the causation of temporal lobe epilepsies. The book discusses matters of interest to all neurologists, neurosurgeons, and psychiatrists.


This book is a fine monument to American neurosurgeons who dealt with nerve injuries during the Second World War. The records were kept in great detail, and important practical problems of treatment and prognosis were solved. A statistical analysis of the functional disability and the effect on employment is of special value, and gives the surgeon a good idea of what should be expected of his patient.

Although this work contains so much of great value to the surgeon it is disappointing to find so little reference to the all-important handling of these cases as regards physiotherapy, restriction of free use of the limb, etc. Apparently these patients were kept in hospital for very long periods (over 85% for over 400 days) and it is difficult to see what good these long periods of hospital treatment could do. Certainly there is no attempt to justify such an extreme policy of close supervision.

There is also little attempt to study many of the physiological problems regarding regenerating nerves, such as the occurrence of mass movement, the rate of nerve conduction or the physical proportion of denervated muscle.

However, in spite of these shortcomings, this work should be read by those who deal with nerve injuries.


This monograph from Zurich is an outstanding contribution to a subject which has assumed increasing importance in recent years, even since vertebral arteriography has become widely used. The sections on anatomical variations, clinical syndromes, aneurysms, and vascular malformations are of special interest. Neurologists, neurosurgeons, and radiologists should have this book available for reference.


This is a text-book of neurology rather than a synopsis. The text has been revised for this sixth edition and new material added, particularly in the sections on the acute
infections of the nervous system. The text follows orthodox lines with short accounts of anatomy and physiology and excellent detailed descriptions of neurological disorders. There are a number of illustrations, many of them reproduced from other text-books, but the reproductions of radiographs are poor. The names of many authors are given in the text after various statements but no references are given so detracting from the value of the book.


This is the third edition of a book which has won an established place in neuropsychiatry. It has been said that psychological medicine is "the other half of medicine" (and some may add the more important half). This book may be viewed as an illustration of this theme. All disease is to some extent "psychosomatic": but in some diseases manifested in physical signs the psychological precipitants are more obtrusive than in others. Asthma is often cited as an example, and a variety of gastro-intestinal upsets—mucous colitis, nervous diarrhoea, and some forms of dyspepsia—are of the same group. These first earned the name "psychosomatic", but they provided a jumping-off place for a much wider interpretation of the ways in which psychological factors—in practice mainly emotional ones— influenced physiological mechanisms to produce symptoms. It is this wider and more fundamental sense of psychosomatic medicine which is admirably dealt with in this book. The first four chapters describe the basic psychological mechanisms involved and their ways of influencing physiology. Thereafter, chapters are devoted to the application of these principles in disease of each of the main bodily systems. Illustrative case histories form a valuable part of the text. There is a slight tendency to overlook the two-way nature of psychosomatics and to concentrate on the psychogenesis of physical states to the exclusion of the physical factors which may start, or more often aggravate, psychological symptoms. This may be inevitable after a century or more of exclusive emphasis on the physical origin of disease. It is in any case less marked in this than in many books on this subject. Neurologists and psychiatrists can hardly fail to find this book interesting: nor, unless they are working intensively in this field themselves, can they fail to be informed by it.


This text-book has now passed through eight editions and has been in very active circulation for 30 years. When it first appeared, psychiatry was feeling the impact of Freudian psychopathology and its derivatives: since then the growing point of psychiatric research has changed, and the organic substrate of mental disease is occupying increasing interest. It is a tribute to this book, and especially to the Meyerian psychobiological psychiatry it represents, that it has been able to some extent to encompass this change of psychiatric emphasis within its original framework. To a psychiatrist of the 1920s visiting either an active university centre or an outlying mental hospital today the striking change would undoubtedly be in the development of physical methods of treatment. Psychosurgery, electroplexy, insulin, and a large number of tranquilizing, euphoriant, and even hallucinatory drugs would be novel or greatly expanded methods of treatment. But these are only the outward and visible signs of a more widespread interest in the fundamental biochemistry and biophysics of the cells of the body, and especially the brain, as fundamental factors in mental disease. This is what is giving psychiatry its "new look", and it is inevitable to ask how any modern psychiatric text-book presents this aspect of the subject. The eighth edition of the book is certainly aware of the changing outlook, mentions it where appropriate in discussion of aetiology and even nosology, and even refers to some of the recent literature. However, there is a slight impression that it is at present oriented on to the older text rather than an integral part of it. There is nothing in these recent trends that is foreign to Meyer's widely based biological approach, and doubtless further editions of the book and the advances of this aspect of psychiatry will give the authors an opportunity to emphasize the wider implications of this approach. Meantime, while fundamental causes elude us, descriptive psychiatry will remain essential. As a text-book of descriptive psychiatry this work continues to be a most excellent introduction and deserves its place as the leading short text-book of British psychiatry.


The eighth edition of this American text-book has been very thoroughly revised, so much so that it is virtually a new book. It has been reduced by about 50 pages from the previous edition, largely by the exclusion of case histories, but is a thicker book, being printed on much poorer paper.

One can summarize by saying that this book is a fairly orthodox presentation of American dynamic psychiatry. This will be sufficient indication for many psychiatrists of the book's merits and demerits: for others, one can say that the emphasis throughout is on psychodynamic theories rather than facts. For example, the psychopathology of endogenous depression receives six pages but Kallman's figures are dismissed in a paragraph. This is reasonable only if one agrees with the authors that "increasing evidence accumulates to support this belief that psychologic causes of this disorder are the predominant ones."

The emphasis in the discussion on psychodynamics leads to incongruities. In the treatment of the affective
disorders one has the impression that psychotherapy is the treatment of choice, for E.C.T. receives scant mention. It comes somewhat as a surprise, therefore, to read further on in the same chapter that the authors feel that they can dispense with instructions about the maintenance of the physical health of depressed patients because "the advent of shock therapy . . . makes patients' symptoms evolve so rapidly . . ."

The literature surveyed is almost exclusively American: on the subject of post-traumatic syndromes, for instance, one reads with astonishment that "according to verbal reports from the Office of Scientific Research and Development", the duration of the period of unconsciousness following head injury is the best guide to the severity of the post-traumatic changes. In these days of fast travel, it should not take 23 years for Ritchie's work to cross the Atlantic.

All in all, a very uneven book, likely to confuse rather than educate.


The examination of the patient with organic cerebral disease often falls between the two stools of psychiatry and neurology. While the neurologist is interested in dysphasia and its ramifications, he is often uninterested in or ignorant of confusional states and their content. The psychiatrist on the other hand may recognize clearly enough the confusional state and assign a correct psychogenesis to some of its contents while missing the element of agnosia or apraxia that is playing a part in the clinical picture. It is just such a borderland that this small book deals with. Its systematic approach will be useful to both neurologists and psychiatrists who do not meet a great many of such cases, although those who see many may feel that many aspects really require rather fuller treatment than is here afforded. It can be recommended as an introduction to the subject, particularly to students for the Diploma of Psychological Medicine.


This book is the third to be written on air encephalography by this author since he became interested in the subject over 20 years ago. He is well known as one of the originators of modern techniques of air encephalography which have greatly increased its safety and decreased its discomforts. Other workers have tended to simplify the technique and have adapted it to investigate patients with raised intracranial pressure, a practice which the author himself deplores.

This volume contains clear descriptions of the author's technique of air encephalography, of the normal brain anatomy disclosed by air injections, and of his theories on the mechanism of ventricular filling. Much of those sections appeared in previous volumes, but their reproduction is welcome because copies of the author's first book ("Encephalography") have been unobtainable in this country for several years. This present book also contains excellent descriptions of the abnormal conditions likely to be encountered, including injuries, vascular disease, congenital lesions, and diseases in childhood.

The section on space-occupying lesions shows the reasons for the various abnormal signs produced by masses in different situations, rather than giving mere lists of changes. The author pays particular attention to the information obtained from deformity of the basal cisterns in all his descriptions. There is also a very useful chapter on the causes of failure to obtain air-filling of the ventricles and on the remedies to be applied.

The book is well printed and is profusely illustrated with clearly coloured plates and excellent radiographs. It should become a standard text-book on the subject of air encephalography and should appeal to all those who are interested in neuroradiology.


This small volume represents the outcome of a symposium on tranquillizing drugs arranged jointly by the American Psychiatric Association and the American Physiological Society. Experimental investigations in animals of some of the electrophysiological effects were reported. Clinical aspects of the drugs, especially in the treatment of psychotic states, are also described, and some problems of dosage and side-effects are mentioned.

The book will be of interest to psychiatrists and neurologists wishing to know something of applications in biochemistry in this field.

Correction

In this paper, "The Entry of Radiosodium and of Bromide into Human Cerebrospinal Fluid" (J. Neurol. Neurosurg. Psychiat., 20, 1957) by R. B. Bourdillon, M. Fischer-Williams, Honor V. Smith, and K. B. Taylor, Figs. 1 and 4 have been transposed, though the legends are in the correct positions. Thus the legend under the present Fig. 1 explains the graph shown as Fig. 4 and vice versa. In addition, the legend to Fig. 1 should read: Effects of age in patients with no abnormal physical signs.

Societa' Italiana di Neuro Chirurgia

The Societa' Italiana di Neuro Chirurgia will hold its ninth congress in Florence on April 24 and 25, 1958. Two subjects will be discussed:

1. Cerebral abscesses and suppurative encephalitis
2. Cervical discal herniations and cervical spondylosis

Further information may be obtained from the Secretary (Dr. Giulio Morello, Via Celoria 11, Milan, Italy).