Book reviews

NEUROLOGIC MANIFESTATIONS OF GENERAL DISEASES By John A. Aita. (Pp. xiii + 921. \$24.50.) Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas.

One thing that always seem to impress a new house physician to a neurological unit is the way in which his work takes him into other departments of the hospital. The practising neurologist soon realizes that some of his most interesting material will come from these departments. Despite the technical achievements within the subject it is probably true to say that the most important trend in neurology in the last 25 years has been that of integration with the whole field of clinical medicine. This book is a very clear demonstration of this development and is one which many neurologists and physicians will wish to possess. It is not a manual destined to gather dust on a departmental shelf. One has only to dip into it to appreciate its potential usefulness.

The object of the author has been to describe the incidence, nature, and significance of neurological phenomena appearing in general diseases. The book is designed primarily to assist clinical diagnosis; pathology and therapy are dealt with only briefly. There are 24 chapters and the subject matter is extensive. Cardiovascular diseases, endocrine diseases, connective tissue diseases, neoplastic diseases, general metabolic diseases, allergic disease, nutritional deficiencies, complications of pregnancy, chromosomal abnormalities, osteogenic diseases, and dermatological diseases are representative of the general contents. The arrangement of the text with its headings and sub-headings makes for easy reading and reference. At the end of each chapter there are lists of references grouped according to the subject matter.

One might at first think that there are so many lists of symptoms, signs, and catalogued summaries that reading would be irksome. It is certainly not a book to pick up and read through. It is essentially for reference. Each chapter adequately summarizes modern views on the various topics and many of them are quite comprehensive. Chapter 1, for example, describing the neurological manifestations of cardiovascular disease, is particularly useful. To mention but a few examples of the book's usefulness, the reviewer was able to find short descriptions of neurological complications of such rare conditions as xeroderma pigmentosum, psittacosis, and albinism, all subjects which had recently come his way. Criticisms are slight indeed. The term 'chronic brain syndrome' (dementia) is one of those American terms which are not likely to be accepted elsewhere. There are very occasionally spelling mistakes. An additional chapter describing the neurological complications of medical and surgical therapy might be useful.

The whole work reflects considerable experience and industry and the author is to be congratulated. It is a worthy addition to American neurological literature.

J. D. SPILLANE

THE CLINICAL EXAMINATION OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM 12th ed. by (the late) G. H. Monrad-Krohn. (Pp. xii + 474; 172 figures. 45s.) London: H. K. Lewis & Co. Ltd. 1964.

Half a century ago a young Norwegian neurologist published his 'Clinical Examination of the Nervous System', and his book has enjoyed translations into French, Spanish, German, and English. The first English edition appeared in 1921 and the current edition has been revised by his successor in Oslo, Professor Sigvald Refsum. It has well justified the author's claim that it is a book 'from the clinic for the clinic'.

The presentation is orthodox and quite detailed. It stresses that complete clinical examination of the nervous system is a time-consuming procedure and instructs the reader how to proceed. However, like most books of this kind, it does not offer that type of practical guidance in the interpretation of symptoms and signs which is so essential to the young clinician. The book might well help a candidate for the D.P.M., but whether a house physician in a neurological department would find it attractive is doubtful. This is not to say that it does not contain a lot of interesting and instructive information. The footnotes alone are worthy of study.

Although well produced it has an old-fashioned air. The modern student might find many phrases unusual: 'historia morbi', 'therapia causalis', 'status praesens', 'decursus morbi', et cetera. Some of the illustrations look so nineteenth century. For example, Fig. 74, the ataxic, pinafores girl crawling on the floor; Fig. 76, the motor points on the sculptured classic head. The sketch of the old leper with the facial palsy (Fig. 36) might be of an old rustic in a corner of a Devonshire inn. But most out of place are the sketches, in Figs. 86 and 87, intended to depict 'mentally defective children'; they look for all the world like illustrations of the characters in a story from a Victorian ladies' journal. Some of the new illustrations might also be omitted. Surely it is not necessary to show, as in Fig. 49, how a young neurologist should hold a ciné camera with attached photoflood lamps when photographing involuntary movements.

Having made these criticisms, one must nevertheless admit that the book is not dull to read; it is full of interesting data and carries the personal stamp of its eminent author. It is a kind of 'summa neurologiae'.

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THE MOTOR ENDPLATE By Sumner I. Zacks. (Pp. xii + 321; 96 figures. 119s.) Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company. 1964.

The last 20 years have seen notable advances in the study of the structure and function of the motor endplate of normal muscle and there is renewed interest in the pathology of this region, stimulated by new histological techniques. Physiologists and pathologists have felt that