The clinical examination of the nervous system


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, pinafored 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 cine 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'.

J. D. SPILLANE

The motor endplate


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

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