Book reviews


One thing that always seem to impress a new house physician to a neurological unit is the way in which his work is using 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


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’, ‘terapia 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 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
it needed only the definition of the ultrastructure of the junctional region by the electron microscope to explore the electrophysiologist's findings at the molecular level and to disclose the mechanisms of neuromuscular disease.

This short monograph gives a full account of the previous studies on the histology and experimental pathology of the neuromuscular junction and a sufficient, though limited, discussion of the electrophysiological data to suggest that the time has now come to make the synthesis. Unfortunately, it must be concluded that the book is a little premature. From the author's own excellent work it is evident that electron microscopy is subject to serious artefacts, even in the hands of experts, and it is still too early to accept any findings as definitive. The author has made important contributions to the study of tetanus, botulism, and myasthenia gravis by electron microscopy of the motor endplate but his conclusions are tentative. One feels that this work is so near its goal as to wish that publication had been postponed for a little while. Nevertheless, all workers in the field of neuromuscular disease will welcome the detailed account of earlier work, including significant papers published as late as 1963. There is a useful appendix on staining methods, and on methods of electron microscopic study of endplates.

The book is beautifully illustrated and the publishers are to be congratulated on producing this elegant volume with the minimum of delay.

J. A. SIMPSON

DIE PERIPHERE INNERRATION, 12th ed. By E. Villiger (Foreword by E. Ludwig). (Pp. 220; 87 illustrations. S.F.24.) Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe & Co. 1964. Professor Ludwig's latest edition of Villiger's Die Peripherie Innervation deserves a warm welcome from neurologists. There are few English textbooks which contain both clinical illustrations of neurological patients and such detailed treatment of the anatomy of peripheral nerves. There is also a brief account of the histology of peripheral nerve, including results of recent research in electron-microscopy. It is clear that a great deal of trouble has been taken to keep this famous and respected textbook up to date.

R. W. GILLIATT


This book is a record of papers presented at a conference on mechanisms of demyelination which was held at UCLA in 1962, under the sponsorship of the UCLA Brain Research Institute and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. The principal speakers at this conference were well chosen to cover the subject from a wide range of approaches, and the volume opens with a well illustrated chapter by F. S. Sjöstrand on the structure and function of the myelin sheath. The chemistry of myelin and the various biochemical approaches to different forms of demyelination are briefly described by J. N. Cumings. It is clear, however, that it was immunology and its applications to at any rate certain types of demyelinating disease that occupied the centre of the stage at this conference. Two chapters, by Carl M. Pearson and Robert A. Good, are devoted to fundamental considerations of immunology and immunological mechanisms. As is to be expected, recent work on experimental allergic encephalomyelitis is dealt with fully, and a whole chapter by Abner Wolf compares and contrasts spontaneous human and experimental simian demyelinating diseases.

As a survey of the status in 1962 of immunological work in this field this book is to be recommended, as it contains much information and critical thought. It is a pity perhaps that other approaches did not receive equal attention, but, as the authors admit, the book does not make any claims to completeness. It is well produced and the illustrations on the whole are good. It is, in short, a volume that should certainly be of value to all who are working in this field.

R. H. S. THOMPSON

CORRELATIVE NEUROANATOMY AND FUNCTIONAL NEUROLOGY, 12th ed. By J. G. Chusid and J. J. McDonald. (Pp. 396; illustrated. 45s.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1964. This volume, now in its 12th edition, is useful to those beginning the study of neurology and has proved to be popular with students and medical practitioners.

PRINCIPLES OF CEREBRAL LOCALIZATION AND ORGANIZATION Edited by Georges Schaltenbrand and Clinton N. Woolsey. (Pp. 164; illustrated. $7.50.) Madison and Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press. 1964. This volume reports a conference held four years ago. It was organized by Drs. Schaltenbrand and Bay, who felt that a meeting of experienced clinicians should consider and discuss the newer physiological knowledge of brain mechanisms. The discussion which followed each paper is fully reported and makes an interesting and stimulating feature of this presentation.

MORPHOLOGICAL AND BIOCHEMICAL CORRELATES OF NEURAL ACTIVITY Edited by Maynard M. Cohen and Ray S. Snider. (Pp. xii + 244; illustrated. 64s.) London: Harber & Row Ltd. 1964. The development of electron microscopy leads to the consideration of entirely new problems regarding the correlation of structure, function, and biochemistry. This volume collects the work of nearly 30 students of this new science.

TOPICS IN BASIC NEUROLOGY Edited by W. Bargmann and J. P. Schadé. (Pp. 249; illustrated. 75s.) Amsterdam and London: Elsevier Publishing Company. 1964. This volume contains 19 lectures given at a symposium held at the University of Kiel. The predominant theme is that of the ultrastructure of the nervous system, Ranvier's nodes in central fibres and inter-neuronal contact sites receiving special attention and are well illustrated. However, other subjects, such as the mechanism of extensor rigidity in asphyxia of the spinal cord, the central representation of sleep, and recent advances in paleo-neurology, are also included.