Book Reviews

SCIENCE AND MAN By Lord Brain, F.R.S. (Pp. 109. 18s.)
Faber & Faber: London. 1966.

The rare combination of qualities which enabled Russell Brain to accomplish so much in various fields of thought and action is recalled to our memory by this posthumous work. It consists of four lectures. The first, his Presidential Address to the British Association, deals with the scientific approach to behaviour in man and other animals, and the implications it carried for our future. The second, the Linacre Lecture at Cambridge, is an imaginary discussion by a neurologist, a psychologist, and a philosopher on that topic of perennial interest to Brain, perception. The third lecture considers consciousness as the culmination of mind, manifested as the focus of the organism's reaction to its environment. The fourth lecture, delivered to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, examines first the prejudices which are currently entertained regarding science and scientists, and secondly the limitations of any view of human beings which reduces them to physico-chemical systems or bundles of psychological trends and impulses. For Russell Brain the sciences on the one hand, and literature, art, and history on the other, are respectively the public and the private, the general and the unique approaches to the study of man.

MEDICINE AND GOVERNMENT By Lord Brain. (Pp. 22. 7s. 6d.) London Publications: London. 1967.

This Tavistock Lecture for 1966 on Medicine and Government, never delivered and published posthumously, has become Lord Brain's valediction. It is worth reading both for the facts it contains and for its general approach to the problems of the state and medical practice. He had unique qualifications for this essay. His active membership of a number of key committees concerned with National Health Service development, and his own personality lend weight to what he has to say. His factual review and the dispassionate tone he chooses to deliver it, are far more effective than the strident arguments of contending politicians.

The role of successive governments, Conservative and Labour, appears as lamentable. Obtrusive deficiencies in the service were met by the *ad hoc* creation of committees and commissions whose findings and advice were largely ignored. Even the recommendations of the original Spens Committees were repudiated when convenient. One result has been a service which has so little attraction for the doctor that 33% of the annual output of our medical schools seem to prefer practice elsewhere: a service which successive governments rightly claim to be a magnificent ideal and a major social revolution from which there is no turning back—and on which by government decision a smaller proportion of the national income is expended than in any member of the European Community.

However, Lord Brain offers his criticisms and his constructive suggestions for improvement as one who accepts the principles of the N.H.S. and recognizes its great achievements. He argues for more flexibility and decentralization in organization; for a rapprochement between general practice and hospital medicine and an end to the isolation of the general practitioner, one of the gravest of present disadvantages; for some fusion of teaching and non-teaching hospitals; and for a career structure for junior hospital staff. The suggestion for an all-party Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Health Service, if developed, could be especially profitable.

On the financial side he makes a plea for more rational and humane priorities and the diversion of some part of our vast armament expenditure to services for education, research, and health. But he reminds us, and the reminder is timely, medicine is a great and growing tree of which the Health Service is but one among many branches. Much of what he has to say has been said before. In this form and from this man it will convince many who would otherwise dismiss it as prejudiced discontent.

C. W. M. WHITTY

KRANKHEITEN DES NERVENSYSTEMS (Vol. V, part 1, HUMANGENETIK, EIN KURZES HANDBUCH IN FÜNF BÄNDEN) By P. E. Becker and G. Koch. (Pp. xii + 557; illustrated. DM. 174.) Georg Thieme Verlag: Stuttgart. 1966.

It is 25 years since the appearance of the previous comprehensive *Handbuch* of Human Genetics in the German language, edited then by Just and Lange. The volumes of the present series, edited by Professor P. E. Becker, follow a similar plan, this volume being devoted to neurological disorders, though, unfortunately for the pocket of the neurologist, the myopathies appeared in Volume III, part 1, and epilepsy, migraine, and narcolepsy have been allocated to the volume on psychiatry, which is yet to be published.

By 1940 the study of human genetics in Germany was seriously handicapped in two ways. First, the co-operation of 'tainted' families was often minimal in view of their fears of sterilization under the race laws, and it is of interest that such an attitude still persists to this day (see for instance *Humangenetik* I, footnote p. 444). Secondly, underlying genetical theories were influenced by political notions, a defect from which this volume is largely free, though traces of it can still be detected—as for example in the (admittedly somewhat half-hearted) support given to concepts such as status dysraphicus. On the whole, however, a positive stand has been made, particularly by the senior author, for the contribution that genetics can make towards the nosology of neurological disorders. A fault in the structure of a particular polypeptide is now thought to be the specific