Book reviews

PROCEEDINGS OF THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF NEUROLOGISTS. Reporting the Second Congress of the Asian and Oceanian Association of Neurologists. Vol. 5, 1968, Parts 1, 2, and 3. (Pp. 658; illustrated). Published by the Australian Association of Neurologists.

The Asian and Oceanian Neurologists have built up a tremendous reputation in a number of fields, particularly perhaps in applied neurophysiology. European and American workers can no longer neglect to pay close attention to what is going on in this part of the world, and this fine publication of the Proceedings of the Second Asian and Oceanian Congress is a most impressive production, and all neurologists may be advised to study the contributions carefully.

W. RITCHIE RUSSELL

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF MEMBRANES *British Medical Bulletin* Vol. 24, No. 2. Edited by D. H. Northcote. (Pp. 99-186; illustrated, £2.) Medical Department, The British Council: London. 1968.

The unusually long gestation period of the clinical research worker is even greater in the specialties. By the time the young doctor has gained his professional training and sufficient experience to have understanding of the problems indicated by his clinical work it will be 10 and more often 20 years after his introduction to the principles of biology, biophysics, and biochemistry. As these subjects advance rapidly they develop a jargon which is as esoteric as the frequently derided one of the clinician. The failure of communication forces the clinical research worker to struggle along with a working knowledge which is always out of date. The function of the *British Medical Bulletin* is to provide up-to-date bridges with particular reference to the work of British workers. To achieve this there is a premium on inter-disciplinary communication.

This number is a summary of a field of study which is rapidly becoming indispensable for neurophysiologists and others interested in excitable tissues. It contains a valuable and highly condensed guide to the recent literature on the subject, but unfortunately frequently fails when tested by the criterion of ability to enlighten the interested and reasonably well informed but unspecialized clinical reader. It is, on the whole, unlikely to interest neurologists with the exception of the last two papers. The account of the structure of the sarcoplasmic reticulum in vertebrate muscle by Dr. Sally Page is an admirable and succinct presentation of an advance in knowledge which should now be familiar to those working on myopathies. The reviewer has not found a clearer account. Professor McIlwain reviews his well-known work on the metabolic responses to electrical excitation of excised human brain and his more recent work on

electrical phenomena. These throw little light on the membrane properties, but justify his views that the isolated sample of cortex remains surprisingly viable for physiological study. The emphasis on British work may explain the scanty reference to the important studies of Tasaki and his colleagues which we have recently reviewed.

J. A. SIMPSON

YEAR BOOK OF NEUROLOGY, PSYCHIATRY AND NEUROSURGERY: 1967-1968 SERIES Edited by Roland P. Mackay, S. B. Wortis, and O. Sugar. (Pp. 684; illustrated. 112s.) Year Book Publishers: Chicago. (English agents: John Wiley, Chichester). 1968.

When Dr. Roland P. Mackay, for 19 years editor of the Neurology section of this popular Year Book, died earlier this year, the current volume had not been completed, and the publishers were fortunate in obtaining the services of Dr. Russell de Jong in arranging the material and adding editorial comments.

Being a topical volume, it is not surprising to find a number of extracts dealing with the epidemiology of neurological disease, such as multiple sclerosis, kuru, and scrapie, while drug toxicity, and myasthenia gravis are well represented. The present reviewer is hardly qualified to discuss the merits of the psychiatric abstracts, but again many of these deal with topical problems, such as abortion, LSD and other drug addictions, violence, and the problems of permissive adolescence. Many individual diagnostic and therapeutic techniques are described in the neurosurgery section, some with illustrations, and the surgery of vascular anomalies occupies a large section. This includes discussion of the controversial methods of demonstration and excision of spinal angiomas. The editor of this section includes comments arising from scientific meetings and which have not appeared in print, which within certain limits is of additional value, and he also includes some papers to illustrate confusion of thought on some of the more difficult subjects, which would seem to be a novel idea.

The book differs from abstracting journals by maintaining a fluid and readable style throughout, and it is one into which the reader can dip again and again and still find something of interest.

EDWIN BICKERSTAFF

RESEARCH IN MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY Proceedings of the Fourth Symposium, January 1968. Edited by Members of the Research Committee of the Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain. (Pp. xvi + 472; illustrated; 60s.) Pitman Medical: London. 1968.

Many readers of this journal will be familiar with the