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failure of communication forces the clinical research worker to struggle along with a working knowledge which is always out of date.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

work reported in the published proceedings of the two previous symposia on Current Research in Muscular Dystrophy organized by the Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain and held in 1963 and 1965 respectively. The increased size of this volume, in which the proceedings of the fourth symposium held in January 1968 are reported, pays testimony to the increased volume of work in this field now being undertaken in Great Britain.

The volume opens with the Joan Vincent Memorial Lecture, given by the Chairman of the Group, Professor F. J. Nattrass, in which he describes historical developments in medical knowledge concerning the muscular dystrophies and related disorders, and goes on to relate the remarkable progress made by the Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain since its inception. The remainder of the volume describes the contributions of individual research workers supported by financial aid from the Group. It is packed with valuable facts and information and full of useful references to the recent literature. Unfortunately some of the photographic reproductions have probably suffered as a result of the rapid off-print process used in publication. Nevertheless, the volume can be confidently recommended as giving an invaluable survey of current research into muscle diseases in Great Britain.

A CLINICAL STUDY OF MIGRAINE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE MOST SEVERE CASES By Axel Klee. (Pp. xv + 190; illustrated. Danish Kroner 50.00.) Munksgaard: Copenhagen. 1968. (*Partly in English and partly in Danish.*)

This monograph reviews 150 cases of migraine, 50 seen personally by the author. For inclusion in the study, migraine is taken to be 'paroxysmal headache accompanied by marked discomfort'. 'Severity' both of individual attacks and of the disorder as a whole is defined: duration of attack seems to be the main criterion in each case. Correlations between severity and a number of features of migraine are then made. In general, the rather diffuse definition of migraine and of severity casts some doubt on the value of this study. However, the book records a number of interesting points in the semeiology of migraine, though they are not easy to find.

C. W. M. WHITTY

NEUROLOGY: A CONCISE CLINICAL TEXTBOOK By Joseph A. Luhan. (Pp. viii + 526; illustrated. £6.) Williams & Wilkins: Baltimore. (Edinburgh agents: E. & S. Livingstone.) 1968.

This textbook is intended to cover the needs of medical students and residents, although its size—over 500 pages—hardly accords with its author's description of it as a succinct orientation. The first section is a general consideration of the functional organization of the nervous system and of common symptoms and signs. It is admirable in conception, but the result may, in places, be a disappointment to the well-informed student of physiological knowledge. The author's approach is traditional, didactic, and descriptive. The function of the muscle spindles in the regulation of the muscle tone is

discussed in a few lines and there is confusion over conscious projection of proprioceptive sensation from muscle. The remainder of the book follows traditional lines. There is an excellent anatomical supplement of coronal brain slices and Weigert-stained sections of brain-stem which are models of clarity. The systematic descriptions of nervous system disorders are clearly set out and the illustrations, both clinical and pathological, are of excellent quality. The approach to drug therapy is practical and helpful and an unusual and informative chapter deals with neurological aspects of general medical conditions. The final pages are devoted to an index of rare syndromes with a short description of each. This is a riot of eponyms and is enough to deter the most stout-hearted student. It contains everything from Avello's syndrome to Fothergill's neuralgia and Kojernikoff's epilepsy, but there is no mention of writer's cramp.

R. W. ROSS RUSSELL

BACKGROUND TO MIGRAINE Edited by R. Smith. (Pp. 166; illustrated. 36s.) William Heinemann Medical Books: London. 1967.

This book records the proceedings of the First Migraine Symposium held at the National Hospital, Queen Square, November 1966. It contains a foreword by the Minister of Health, a history of migraine by Dr. Macdonald Critchley, and a series of papers on the radiological investigation and electroencephalography of migraine, the cerebral circulation, the relation of the hypothalamus to migraine, and biochemical aspects of the subject. The object of the Symposium was to encourage research into the possible anatomical, physiological, and pharmacological mechanisms involved in the migraine attack. It is extraordinary that so little is known of the aetiology of an ailment which afflicts so many and of which the clinical aspects have been so thoroughly described over the centuries. Theories and opinions abound. There is still no agreement on the question of the personality of the migraine subject. It is hoped that intensive biochemical study of patients before, during, and after an attack, will throw some light on its causation. Epidemiological surveys of a condition which has still to be defined must have limited value.

The vascular hypothesis, which is generally accepted, began 40 years ago with the report of the efficacy of ergotomine tartrate in the relief of the disorder. The metabolism of vasoactive substances and their action on receptor sites is a line of research which is being pursued.

J. D. SPILLANE

MÉCANISMES CÉRÉBRAUX DU LANGAGE By R. Husson. (Pp. 60; illustrated.) L'Expansion Scientifique Française: Paris. 1968.

The author of this monograph attempts an explanation of the cerebral mechanisms of language, based on Barbizet's concept of the neuronal metacircuit and Hyden's RNA studies. He has analysed language processes according to semantic background, modality, and motor response; and has then postulated a number of theoretical systems which might control language behaviour. The scheme is coherent and stimulating; it has more