Book Reviews

EPILEPSY By William Pryse-Phillips (with a chapter on electroencephalography by S. G. Bayliss). Pp. viii + 96; 12 figures, 3 tables. 18s.) John Wright & Sons: Bristol. 1969.

The author of this short text rightly feels that the epileptic needs all the assistance that an enlightened society can offer. He does not content himself with advice on drugs, but writes of the problems of education, marriage, pregnancy, and employment which arise, reminding us that 40% of patients need assistance in finding jobs. Dr. Pryse-Phillips has not tried to write a scholarly monograph, but, although the clinical aspect is well summarized, he might have devoted more than three pages to the chapter entitled Neurophysiology. The role of trauma, the chemistry of epilepsy, and the way anticonvulsants are thought to work are topics which would enrich the text. Dr. Bayliss presents a readable account of the use and limitations of electroencephalography, but he too might have said more, for example, of the prognostic value of electroencephalography in epilepsy. Treatment is well described but it is not stated by what route sodium phenytoin and diazepam should be given in status epilepticus. One has the feeling that the author wished to get his thoughts on epilepsy straight and that the exercise would assist others. It probably will fulfil this modest function. Any young doctor who works in an epilepsy clinic would find this book helpful.

J. D. SPILLANE

THE PROGNOSIS OF PATIENTS WITH EPILEPSY By Ernst A. Rodin. (Pp. 455; illustrated. \$19.50). Charles C. Thomas: Springfield, Illinois. 1969.

This is an interesting book on an important subject. Most of us, when faced with a patient who has had his first fit, especially if he is young, will certainly want to know if there is any precipitating or causative factor and we may carry Hughlings Jackson's adjuration to consider 'where is the lesion?' in the back of our minds, but we will be concerned almost at once with prognosis—whether fits are going to continue, how they will respond to treatment, and how they may affect intelligence, behaviour, and future education and employment. These are the sort of questions that are considered in this book. In the first part the author reviews the literature on prognosis in epilepsy in general and in a number of special groups such as petit mal, febrile convulsion, and traumatic epilepsy; and considers what has been said about intelligence and mortality in epilepsy. This section contains much information and some useful critical reassessment of older views. In the second part the author calls on his own experience and the material of the Michigan Epilepsy Center and Lafayette Clinic to answer similar questions about prognosis. Here again a large amount of valuable and detailed information is available but it is rather less readily accessible than in the

first section. In a final chapter of conclusions we are given an excellent resumé of modern views on the aetiology and pathophysiology of epilepsy '... the main problem in epilepsy is not only the epileptogenic focus... but the abnormal spread (of the discharge)... Those factors which allow for spread are in all probability related to the seizures propensity of the individual'. This may sound obvious but it is constantly forgotten in the concentration on the focus, both in treatment and research. The book can be recommended to all those concerned with the management of epilepsy. It contributes facts and thought to an important practical problem which has too often been a subject for misquoted *obiter dicta*.

C. W. M. WHITTY

L'ENFANT ÉPILEPTIQUE By Albert Grasset. (Pp. viii + 252, 13 figures. 10 F.) Presses Universitaires de France: Paris. 1968.

This small book, one of a series of practical handbooks on child psychiatry, is an excellent account by a senior French clinician of the nature and treatment of epilepsy in children. The classification is rational, and the description of seizure patterns is clear, enabling the reader versed in a different terminology to identify the categories described. Biochemical and other factors predisposing to seizures or concerned with their precipitation are discussed. Treatment and management are orthodox.

The second part of the book is addressed mainly to magistrates, teachers, and social workers. It contains useful chapters on the doctor-patient relationship, problems of family, school, leisure, choice of work, driving, and marriage. It ends with some advice on helping the child to accept his disability. The good bibliography is international, but naturally greatly influenced by the outstanding contributions to epilepsy of French workers.

J. A. SIMPSON

STROKE IN ISRAEL, 1957-61: Epidemiological, Clinical, Rehabilitation, and Psycho-social Aspects. By E. Adler. (Pp. 263). Polypress: Jerusalem, Israel. 1969.

This is an account of cerebrovascular disease in the Israeli population over a five-year period, sponsored by a U.S. Government grant. Rehabilitation and psycho-social aspects receive particular attention and the influence of factors such as race, sex, site of initial lesion, aphasia, blood pressure, and diabetes on the degree of recovery are carefully analysed. This and the epidemiological section of the book are timely and valuable additions to the literature on cerebrovascular disease and are to be recommended, particularly since the survey, which includes all but the most minor forms of cerebrovascular disease, is more representative than many previous reports. The clinical section adds little to existing knowledge. The various chapters by different authors have been

admirably edited and integrated by Professor Adler, and most chapters have a summary and full bibliography. The book should be available to all concerned with the common clinical problems of cerebrovascular disease.

FUNCTIONS OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM Vol. I. GENERAL PHYSIOLOGY. AUTONOMIC FUNCTIONS By Marcel Monnier. (Pp. xxiv + 671; illustrated. 360s.) Elsevier: Amsterdam/London/New York. 1968.

This is the first of four volumes which will constitute the most ambitious account of the functions of the nervous system since the explosion of neurophysiological studies made one's copy of Fulton look like a relic of a bygone age. It deals with general neurophysiology in Part I—an adequate but uninspired and curiously dated account. The rest of the book is devoted to the organization of visceral functions by the autonomic nervous system, based largely on the work of Monnier himself and of his mentor W. R. Hess. Much of this work has been difficult to obtain in the English language. It is now available from an authority and will be a very valuable work of reference. It is important to emphasize that for the Zürich school the autonomic system embraces much more than the sympathetic and parasympathetic outflow. There is a good account of the homeostatic functions of the reticular apparatus, diencephalon and rhinencephalon. Neuro-endocrinological relationships are discussed and the regulation of cerebral blood flow and CSF. One is consumed with admiration at the ability of the author to cover this field, but this inevitably means selection. Thus, it is surprising to note a brief reference to ventriculo-cisternal perfusion, but no account of the results obtained. The Californian studies on hypothalamic stimulation are ignored, and the role of the gamma motor neurones in respiration is not mentioned (nor is fusimotor function discussed in the section on general physiology). The account of clinical autonomic physiology is scanty and ignores much recent work. Indeed a serious criticism of the book is that it is rarely possible to be certain which species is being referred to, and whether the conclusions can be extrapolated to the human. Despite these criticisms, there is no comparable book containing so much of the type of information a neurologist or clinical neurophysiologist does not use in daily practice, but requires to have available for reference. The book is expensive, but strongly recommended for the department library.

J. A. SIMPSON

HANDBOOK OF CLINICAL NEUROLOGY Edited by P. J. Vinken and G. W. Bruyn. Vol. 6: Diseases of the Basal Ganglia. (Pp. xi + 889; illustrated. 646s.) North Holland Publishing Co.: Amsterdam. 1968.

Few neurologists acquire any clear ideas regarding current research and knowledge of the functions of the basal ganglia, and, indeed, they are perforce obliged to be content with the exercise of accurate diagnosis of a considerable variety of motor and sensory syndromes. If their inclination is to probe further, then they may read with some profit the chapters in the fine Volume 6 of this new Handbook of Neurology. The severe limitations of existing knowledge are well recognized in these pages.

Thus on p. 111 Dr. Arthur Ward writes 'Unfortunately our knowledge of the detailed function of these inter-related structures is incomplete so that meaningful synthesis is not possible'.

THE DIZZY PATIENT By J. C. Elia. (Pp. ix + 95; 28 figures, 10 tables. \$7.50.) Thomas: Springfield, Illinois. 1968.

This short but expensive book is about vertigo, and where the author restricts himself to this topic he provides an instructive and concise summary of currently accepted views. The techniques of clinical investigation are described with admirable clarity and the account of labyrinthine disorders is unexceptional. The description of related conditions is sometimes unhelpfully vague and at others quite misleading; disseminated sclerosis is characterized by 'mental and personality deterioration, progressive motor disability, convulsions, blindness and a terminal decerebrate and vegetative state'. While displaying a healthy scepticism regarding most forms of therapy, Dr. Elia gives an enthusiastic endorsement for the use of betahistidine hydrochloride. This is based on studies of microcirculation, which are in turn heralded as the key to a wide range of aetiologically obscure disorders. The practising neurologist or otologist is unlikely to find anything in this book with which he is not already familiar. It was presumably directed at a less sophisticated audience but one wonders whether they will be attracted to a book on this apparently specialized topic.

IVAN T. DRAPER

SEROTONIN By Irvine H. Page. (Pp. 143; 1 figure. 75s.) Year Book Publishers: Chicago (English agents—John Wiley: Chichester). 1969.

This small volume (116 pages) forms an excellent reference source. All aspects of knowledge of serotonin are reviewed, necessarily in brief. Half the book is devoted to the biochemistry and physiology of serotonin. Effects on circulatory control, intestinal motility, and central temperature control are summarized. A more detailed review of the significance of content and distribution in the brain, and of the function of serotonin as a neurotransmitter, follows. This is linked with a clear discussion of the mechanism of action of psychotropic drugs in general and of reserpine in particular. The point is well made that, while reserpine and serotonin depletion are causally related, the behavioural effects of reserpine have not been proved due to serotonin depletion. In a brief review of experimental work relating serotonin metabolism to mental disease (schizophrenia, depressive states, mental retardation) the author is guarded in his comments. A short section on serotonin antagonists follows, and there is then a brief mention of all 'states in which serotonin may be involved'. Among the conditions enumerated and a little discussed are carcinoid tumour, dumping syndrome, migraine.

The volume closes with 18 pages of references.

J. M. HOCKADAY