Malta fever, which we call brucellosis after Bruce who discovered the gram-negative organism in 1886, is called Bang's disease in German-speaking countries, following the identification of the organism causing contagious abortion in cows and pigs by Bang and Traum four years later.

This monograph, with its many tables of figures, 207 references, and excellent review of the literature, is recommended to all interested in this disorder, as well as to all medical libraries. It reports the author's 104 cases of brucellosis together with 44 controls; the controls did the same jobs—veterinary surgeons and dairy workers—as the patients, but they were free from the infection.

In this granulomatous infection, the neurological picture occurs mainly in the chronic stage. Between 60% and 85% of patients have symptoms referable to the peripheral nerves, although neurological signs are often minimal. In the author's series, the peripheral nervous system was involved twice as often as the central nervous system. Pain is always an important characteristic of the disease, 73% of this series coming to the doctor on account of pain. It can be burning or shooting; it is in the distribution of the peripheral nerves, in the muscles and in joints. Orthopaedic manifestations of the disease are also common; 35% of the patients presenting with the picture of prolapsed discs. The patient, if untreated, usually recovers spontaneously.

P. W. NATHAN

DISORDERS OF THE SKULL BASE REGION Nobel Symposium

This book of 364 pages is based on the proceedings of the Tenth Nobel Symposium held in Stockholm, August, 1968. It was organized by Swedish otolaryngologists and the proceedings were edited by the Professor and Associate Professor of Otolaryngology of the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm. There were 79 participants, 44 of whom were Swedish; the book was printed in Sweden and published in the United States of America.

The nature of a book with such a title is not self-evident and in view of the extraordinary price the reviewer believes prospective buyers would like to be fully informed of the contents, which are as follows.

Seventeen pages of preliminaries (preface; contents; organizers; participants, and a half page devoted to welcoming and opening address); acoustic neuroma, 130 pages; pituitary gland, 110 pages; glomus jugulare tumours, 40 pages; miscellaneous skull base tumours, 43 pages; and trauma of the skull base, 20 pages.

In each topic there are communications, many of them very brief, on aspects of anatomy, pathology, clinical and radiological investigation, and on surgical techniques. The audiologica! diagnosis of acoustic neuroma takes only three pages; the diagnosis of vestibular system disorders two and a half pages; cerebrospinal fluid diagnosis in acoustic neuroma (50 cases) is the only contribution by a neurologist (two pages, one of which is filled by two tables); the anatomy of the pituitary gland takes four and a half pages, which includes three large illustrations, two of them on the histology of the gland in the guinea-pig; pituitary tumour pathology, five pages (two pages of which are made up of four electron microscope photographs); changes in the sella turcica in pituitary tumours, three and a half pages. And so on.

I have no doubt that the participants enjoyed this symposium, that friendships were established and renewed, and that information was exchanged. But much of the printed discussion is quite banal and lacking editorship. A few examples. 'Did your slides represent material from human beings or animals?' (p. 42). The reply leaves the reader still guessing. And, 'My sincere compliments for a very complete anatomical study presented in a most illustrative manner' (p. 144). And what does this mean? On parapharyngeal tumours (p. 335) 'if you are taking the biopsy specimen through the mouth, you will get scar tissue, which makes extirpation of the tumour much more difficult. Therefore, I advise you to make a puncture biopsy only through the mouth or from outside'.

The book is undoubtedly based on considerable practical achievements by surgeons and radiologists in this region of the human body, and most neurologists will find something of interest in it. A rhinologist contemplating hypophysectomy or an otologist anxious to try his hand at the translabyrinthine approach for acoustic neuroma may think it valuable. $33.50 to a Texan or Californian Otologic Medical Group may be chicken feed, but if, as the secretary of the Nobel Committee of Medicine said in the closing address, 'the main intention of the Nobel donation has been to promote better international understanding and goodwill', then the inflated price of this book only defeats this laudable object.

In the 1970s somebody will surely arrange a symposium to consider how symposia were best organized for the benefit of all.

J. D. SPILLANE


This short volume of essays by a well-known American neurosurgeon is centred round a particular interpretation of Occam's razor. It has all been said before and the style is not outstanding, but it will pass an idle hour. (Neurosurgeons will hope for a better future than Dr. Tarlov predicts.)

J. A. SIMPSON


It is a little unfair to criticize a book prepared in the present circumstances. The late Lord Brain must have been aware that his well-known textbook was becoming too esoteric for the general reader or the candidate for Membership and DPM examinations when he wrote Clinical Neurology for them. On the other hand, 'let's look up Russell Brain' had become heard less often in