
This small and excellently produced book records the papers given at the 4th Migraine Symposium sponsored by the Migraine Trust.

This symposium is aimed at interesting general practitioners and the majority of the papers have a clinical orientation on symptomatology, differential diagnoses, psychiatric aspects, and epidemiology. Most of the contributors reiterate a number of standard clinical facts about the disorder, followed by some ill-defined speculation on aetiology. One message, however, comes across in all the papers—the fact that one should look with scepticism on everything one has been taught about the mechanism of this baffling disease.

In sharp contrast to the clinical papers, and quite out of place, is an experimental paper on the neuropharmacology of ergotamine (already printed elsewhere) in which clinical relevance is barely mentioned.

The best feature of the book is an admirable chapter by Professor J. N. Cumings on the biochemical nature of migraine. This should be required reading by all neurologists and research workers in the field, but is scarcely appropriate for an audience of general practitioners.

Apart from an indication of the laudable activity on the part of the Migraine Trust and of the enormous task which confronts them, there is very little to justify publication of this symposium at the present time.


In the autumn of 1969 the German Neurovegetative Society held this symposium in Göttingen; it has just been published.

The topics dealt with aspects of hormonal sexual regulation through the hypothalamus (14 papers); influence of illumination and of the pineal gland on sexual regulation (nine papers); central nervous regulation and coordination of the drive to maintain the species and the self (two papers); imprinting of hypothalamic sexual functions by the peri- or prenatal endocrine situation; aimed lesions in the hypothalamus (three papers); imprinting of sexual behaviour by the infantile milieu (four papers); antiandrogens (three papers); legal, institutional-psychiatric and constitutional-biological problems of perversions (three papers); the therapy of psychologically determined sexual perversions (two papers); aspects of sexual regulation in females (six papers); sexual divergences in temporal lobe lesions (seven papers); post-traumatic sexual disturbances (five papers); neurological and psychiatric problems (six papers); problems and disturbances of maturation and of the climacteric (five papers); pathological processes in the hypophysis and hypothalamus (seven papers).

The various sections were followed by useful discussions; some, too few, papers contain a summary. The subjects are very adequately covered and the volume will serve admirably as a book of reference. I was far from convinced that either hormonal or anatomical disturbances could account for perversions, although they might clearly lead to hyper- or hyposexuality.

J. SCHORSTEIN


This is a mathematical text concerned primarily with the behaviour to be expected from assemblages of model neurones, such as the McCulloch-Pitts neurone and certain variants of this. The topics dealt with include the prediction of the form of an interval histogram for the discharge of one neurone in a net, the information-storage capacity of a brain assembled according to certain specified principles, and the criteria for stable oscillation in a non-linear system such as the interacting biochemical reactions involved in protein synthesis. The mathematical manipulations are lucidly handled—at any rate up to the last few pages where one is suddenly plunged into the special notation of quantum mechanics. The bibliography looks very useful.

It is salutary to see, worked out in this way, what are the logical consequences of certain assumptions about the way the nervous system works. Interesting light is shed on the nature of some of the questions one is tempted to ask about the brain. Biologists whose problems lie in this field, and who wish to enlist the collaboration of an appropriate mathematician, will find useful indications here of the kind of help that can be available.

T. D. M. ROBERTS


In preparing a new edition of the book on cervical spondylosis, which appeared in 1967 under the joint editorship of the late Lord Brain and the present editor, Marcia Wilkinson and her colleagues have done more than bring the original volume up to date. The emphasis of the book has been altered to make it more useful to the non-specialist and general practitioner and this has been done by expanding the clinical sections and shortening the very full and