book reflects its structure and content. A good introductory section dealing with the anatomy of the visual system and some of its properties is followed by sections discussing animal studies, visual perception in infants, and the perceptual disturbances which can follow cerebral lesions in man. Each chapter is a discrete entity but the apt selection of topics and the specificity of the overall theme make the book a reasonably coherent whole. The importance of eye movements in the perceptual process is particularly stressed, and it is a pleasant surprise to find discussions of both agnosia (by Vignolo and by Hécaen) and the variables affecting the visual threshold (by Dubois-Poulsen) in the same volume. On the other hand it is a pity that, in making the transition from seminar to chapter, three authors have failed to append a bibliography.

There is little here that is new. The book will probably be of greatest value to the French reader as a collection of discussions, written in French, of data which have previously been reported in other languages; but it may also serve to introduce to some English readers the work of authors who usually publish in French—for example, Dubois-Poulsen on visual thresholds, Vurpillot on visual perception in infants, and Jeannerod on the role of eye movements in the perception of space.

G. RATCLIFF

HEAD INJURIES: Proceedings of an International Symposium held in Edinburgh and Madrid (Pp. 342; illustrated; £6.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1971.

There is a reaction setting in against the publication of conference proceedings. This book, which includes some interesting material, exemplifies the difficulty of making a coherent literary work out of a conference. An author can fairly be asked who his work was written for and with what purpose. But the motives behind conferences are complex. Whom you meet is often more important than what is said; and as no one knows, until he comes and submits his manuscript, what the other speakers will say, some duplication is inevitable. This is a tale of two cities but many of the hundred assorted nationals who contributed did not go to both Edinburgh and Madrid. Some of the contributors verge on the parochial and, although others were experts reporting serious studies, many were practising surgeons expounding their experience or parading their prejudices, without the benefit of evidence. A number of contributions are brief to the point of triviality, others turgid with platitudes.

The sequence of chapters looks promising in the contents but it proves less satisfactory in the text. Indeed we seem to start all over again in Madrid;

having gone from prevention to the roadside and through to rehabilitation, we are back at organization, maps, and posters. There are curious juxtapositions which add to the impression of chaos. Next to a report of complex studies with eight channel records is an end-of-year message from the director of the Ambulance Service. The role of the nurse and the importance of lactic acid rate chapters side by side. Many of the specialists whose expertise is sometimes called on in treating head injuries are represented—plastic, ENT, orthopaedic, and thoracic surgeons—and this is useful. But how about this for a title, 'Re-animation in polytraumatism with cranioencephalic involvement or predominance'? In the penultimate section one hapless author deals with 'The diagnosis and treatment of head injuries', in three pages!

This may have been a useful conference to attend and there are snippets of interesting information to be gleaned from reading the book. But to advance real understanding by exchanging data and ideas, a conference has to be limited to a single theme, and the speakers to a small number of acknowledged experts. Only the proceedings of such conferences, such as the Congress of Neurosurgeons in America or the Ciba Symposia in Britain, are really worth publishing, and deserve to be termed scientific works rather than souvenir programmes.

BRYAN JENNETT

ATLAS OF THE HISTOLOGY OF BRAIN TUMORS By Klaus J. Zulch. (Pp. 261; illustrated; DM 78, \$22.60.) Springer: Berlin. 1971.

This book is intended to be a central atlas of brain tumours and, as such, is said to be a guide to the art of classifying brain tumours correctly. I doubt if many neuropathologists will consider that either aim has been achieved, particularly as the author himself admits that the reader should consult his other publications for more detailed descriptions. There is also no indication as to whether this *Atlas* is aimed at experienced or trainee neuropathologists. The former will no doubt enjoy the academic exercise of browsing through the book, questioning some of the diagnoses and the terminology used, and wondering why certain fields—and the reason is often obscure—and magnifications have been chosen to illustrate certain features. The trainee will be overwhelmed by 400 illustrations, a great variety of staining techniques, the wide use of the cresyl violet stain, and the briefest of legends. One feels that the principal reason for their brevity is that they are given in six languages. Clearly a great amount of effort has gone into the preparation of this *Atlas*: it is, therefore, a pity that one cannot be more enthu-

siastic about it. The *Atlas* will no doubt find its way into a great many libraries and laboratories, but I doubt if it will be consulted often.

J. HUME ADAMS

DEMENTIA By Charles E. Wells. (Pp. 239; illustrated; £5.) Blackwell Scientific Publications: Oxford, 1972.

This book lives up to the high standard of the *Contemporary Neurology* series. It is a sound and diverse exposition of the subject of dementia and despite the numbers of contributors there is very little repetition. A few chapters are padded to give a balanced appearance to the book. I have little doubt that it will be standard reading for those training in neurology and psychiatry. Perhaps the only comment might be that the section on normal pressure hydrocephalus might be enlarged as this is a cause of dementia for which treatment is available and occasionally successful.

The clinical chapters are complete and sensible, and the other chapters of great interest, even if they are not of immediate practical concern.

J. D. H. MILLAR

THE GENETICS OF MENTAL DISORDERS By Eliot Slater and Valerie Cowie. (Pp. 413; illustrated; £5.50.) Oxford University Press: London, 1971.

This book, written by two leading authorities, is primarily designed for clinical psychiatrists. The authors hope that it will also prove useful to many in allied specialties. The introduction provides a clear and concise account of the main genetic principles and is followed by coverage, in turn, of each of the major groups of mental disorders. A review of the recent literature for each group is coupled with a discussion of current ideas in the field.

Monogenic or polygenic hypotheses still remain a point of controversy in many of these disorders. The authors favour a single autosomal gene model in the case of schizophrenia, but a polygenic model in the case of the affective psychoses. The evidence is still largely epidemiological and until a biochemical basis for these disorders is defined it seems unlikely that the controversy will be satisfactorily resolved.

When discussing genetic counselling, the authors state that they feel the counsellor should make clear to prospective parents not only the genetic risks *but also the ethical issues involved*. This is a view not universally shared amongst geneticists in this country, many of whom believe that their function is mainly to discuss genetic risks.

Despite much recent progress in the field of mental subnormality, the child with 'non-specific' mental retardation remains a serious problem to paediatricians and genetic counsellors. The authors

discuss this topic in relation to the idea of a Gaussian variation in intelligence, indicating how '... preponderantly important the genetical factors are'. However, empiric figures for idiopathic mental subnormality are not discussed, which is unfortunate, since the much-quoted comparatively low risks given by Penrose have recently been challenged by Reed in the United States.

Inevitably in writing about a rapidly developing field, by the time of publication, the information given will be out of date in some places. In the section on metabolic defects, for example, the specific enzyme deficiencies in the sphingolipidoses have now been well defined.

Altogether the book presents a very comprehensive and well balanced discussion of the current genetic hypotheses in the field of mental disorders.

ROSALIND SKINNER

NOTICES

CLINICAL NEUROLOGY INFORMATION CENTER, NEBRASKA This centre was established in March 1973 at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine under the auspices of the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke. This is the third of a series of information centres in the NINDS Neurological Information Network; Brain Information Service is at UCLA and the Information Center for Hearing, Speech and Disorders of Human Communication is at Johns Hopkins. The initial activities of CNIC will be the publication of state-of-the-art papers; these will be critical reviews of topics of interest to neurologists, neurosurgeons, and other clinical neuroscientists. Information about CNIC may be obtained from: Director, Clinical Neurology Information Center, Medical Library, University of Nebraska College of Medicine, Omaha, Nebraska, U.S.A. 68105.

8TH CONGRESS OF ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAPHY AND CLINICAL NEUROPHYSIOLOGY 1-7 September 1973, Marseilles. Free communications. Round Tables: 'Possibilities and limitations of new methods of data collection and analysis', 'Basic mechanisms of epilepsy', 'Computer analysis of EMG', 'Histopathology of nerve and electrophysiological correlations', 'Clinical neurophysiology of speech' (including mechanisms of reading and writing). Official languages: French and English. Inquiries to Congress Secretary, Mme le Dr. G. C. Lairy, Hôpital Henri Rousselle, 1 rue Cabanis, Paris 14^e, France.