Book reviews

CLINICAL ELECTRONEUROGRAPHY By M. P. Smorto and J. V. Basmajian. (Pp. 234; illustrated; £7.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1972.

It is a little more than 20 years since the first clinical applications of nerve conduction measurement were described and since that time many communications have appeared on the technique of conduction velocity measurement in different peripheral nerves, and in a wide variety of clinical conditions. The authors have reviewed much of this work to provide a comprehensive guide to nerve conduction measurement.

An early section on general principles and technique is followed by detailed descriptions of the methods involved in the measurement of motor and sensory conduction in different peripheral nerves. The account given of the physiology of nerve conduction and the clinical review of peripheral neuropathy are brief, and these sections could usefully be expanded in future editions. A particular merit of the book is the full description of the different entrapment neuropathies and their identification by nerve conduction measurement. The many illustrations are of high quality and the applied anatomy of the peripheral nervous system is very clearly shown. The book is both a useful introduction to the subject and a valuable laboratory handbook for which those working in the field will be grateful.

J. A. R. LENMAN

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEUROSCIENCES By B. A. Curtis, S. Jacobson, and E. M. Marcus. (Pp. 878; illustrated; £8.40.) Saunders: London. 1972.

This is an excellent book. It conforms to all my beliefs and prejudices about the way neurology should be taught. It is beautifully produced with clearly labelled diagrams and well-chosen photographs. The chapters exemplify the dynamic approach to their subjects. Four chapters, totalling 84 pages are devoted to the structure and function of the neurone, the axon, and the neuromuscular junction. There is a chapter on 'The motor system and the integration of reflex activity'. Another describes the relationship of the basal ganglia to movement. Here there is a clear analysis of the current beliefs about the structure and the neuronal connections of the basal ganglia. The synaptic transmitter substances are described and by examples from path-

ology the clinical features which result from disequilibrium in this system are delineated.

Detailed case histories from the files of the New England Medical Centre are used to show how a disease may evolve. There are descriptions of the clinical findings on one or more occasions and summaries of the laboratory data. The clinical descriptions are supplemented by a 'comment'. This may occupy a page or more of the text. It is the sort of summary and interpretation which a good clinician might give during bedside teaching. By following the development of an actual case, the student may derive a sense of contact with the illness. The 'comment' ensures that the particular case is seen in the context of a wider experience. There is a discussion of the individual elements of the illness and the methods of reaching a diagnosis.

The style is sometimes didactic, but it does not seem to be inappropriate. The conclusions are based on well argued theses and are illuminated by experimental work and pathology. The book is intended to present an integrated view of the neurosciences for the medical student. It will refresh anyone who feels that he is losing touch with modern concepts in neurology. It excites the imagination and satisfies the intellect.

I. T. DRAPER

DYSLEXIA AND THE INDIVIDUAL: A study of reading difficulties in 'word blind' children By Patrick Meredith. (Pp. 190; £2.35.) Elm Tree Books: London. 1972.

Professor Patrick Meredith has always been a psychological 'agent provocateur'. In his preface to the present volume he admits: 'The recent history of educational discontent demonstrates just how uncertain our educational system is in its handling of immaturity. Having spent a life-time imprisoned within the system, hammering on one locked door after another, I have some hard things to say about it.' He certainly says them and anybody wishing to find quotations when lecturing on learning disabilities will find them in this volume, for the writing is brilliant.

Essentially the book consists of an account of the Professor Meredith's recognition of the fact that a significant number of children of average intelligence had definable difficulties in learning to read and spell, and his increasing insight into the nature of