One cannot help but think that Ramon y Cajal would have approved of his successors.

D. G. F. HARRIMAN

GAS CHROMATOGRAPHY—MASS SPECTROMETRY IN
NEUROBIOLOGY By E. Costa and B. Holmstedt.
(Pp. 175; illustrated; Dfl. 44.) North Holland:

This is an easily digested book which deals with the
elucidation and determination of a range of drugs
and their metabolites, and other endogenous tissue
constituents of known structure. It is possible that
the link gas chromatography—mass spectrometry
is not the rapid, ideal means of elucidating the structure
of unknown biochemical substances that some of us
fondly imagined, for seven of the 13 chapters deal
with pharmacological or toxicological problems.
The reason appears to be that the equipment is
being used primarily as an expensive detector of
extreme selectivity and sensitivity. The mass spec-
trometer is operating as a means to determine drugs
and their metabolites of known structure or—in the
case of the metabolites—nearly known structure.
The power of this modern approach is emphasized by
the determinations of such endogenous neurotrans-
mitters as acetylcholine in various tissues and brain
and pineal indole alkylamines. Another example of
its value as a clinical tool is shown by the quantitative
determination of 5-HIAA and IAA in CSF of
depressed patients, the finding that the tryptamine
metabolite behaves similarly to 5-HIAA may be in
keeping with the theory of endogenous depression,
and the labelling of the brain homovanillic acid of mice by allowing them simply to
dwell for a short time in 18O-enriched atmospheres demonstrates that it is possible to label brain cate-
cholamines in vivo, and thus avoid the problems of
radiation. HVA is chosen as it is the main dopamin
metabolite leaving the brain; thus, the actual brain
component of the total homovanillic acid in the
urine can be easily assessed. The demonstration that
propanolol forms a glycol metabolite in mouse
brain, only minutes after an injection, in a like
manner to the catecholamine conversion to their
respective glycols, gives an indication of the powerful
though expensive equipment that is available to the
pharmacologists.

P. O. TOSELAND

COMPENDIUM OF THE EPILEPSIES By N. Niedermeyer.
(Pp. 334; illustrated; $14-75.) Thomas: Spring-
field, Ill. 1974.

This book contains a great deal of useful information
about most aspects of epilepsy and will repay careful
study. Although the author is a clinical electrographer
he has clearly taken a great interest in the clinical
aspects of his subject over a period of many years.
The book is said to have been written for general
practitioners and medical students as well as for
specialists, but its wealth of detail does perhaps
make it more suited for the latter than the former.

The first half of the book is devoted to basic
principles and to clinical considerations. In the
middle there is a single short chapter on such
borderland topics as migraine, paroxysmal
abdominal pain, and attacks of vertigo, but these are
dealt with only very cursorily. The remainder of
the book is concerned with diagnosis and management,
and includes chapters on the psychiatric aspects and
neurosurgical treatment of epilepsy.

Not unnaturally, the subject matter of this book
reflects the author's personal experience in the field
of epilepsy and, as such, it is a particularly interesting
contribution to the literature. It also contains much
useful practical advice which could be applied with
benefit to many patients with epilepsy by any
clinician who is prepared to make use of it.

MAURICE PARSONAGE

NEUROSCIENCE: A LABORATORY MANUAL By James
E. Skinner. (Pp. 244; illustrated; price not stated.)

The title of this small book is misleading but it could
be useful for research assistants without background
experience and little time available to complete a
project. In a very short space it gives an adequate
account of electrical activity of the brain, basic
electronics, recording of bioelectric potentials, and
the elements of neuroanatomy and histology of the
brain. Unfortunately, the anatomical section (which
includes a dissection guide) is based on the cow and
sheep brain but the stereotaxic data and experimental
procedures refer to the rat. There are useful in-
structions, with line drawings, on the preparation of
the rat for stereotaxic recording, including the con-
struction of intracranial implant devices.

J. A. SIMPSON

TECHNIQUES IN NEUROHISTOLOGY H. M. Ralis, R. A.
Beesley, and Z. A. Ralis. (Pp. 162; illustrated;

This little book will be found useful in many labora-
tories concerned with morbid anatomy, both general
and neuropathological. There are chapters on the
anatomy of the nervous system for technicians, on
the preparation, on general and neurohistological
staining methods, as well as brief notes on additional
techniques such as preparation for electron and
fluorescence microscopy.

The chapter on general staining methods at first
seems redundant, as these are available in larger
texts, but all the methods described are in use by the authors and they have introduced their own useful modifications to improve results in the nervous system. The text succeeds in its aim of making accessible the special techniques required for demonstrating the component parts of the nervous system, rightly emphasizing that they are still necessary for a proper understanding and demonstration of neuropathology.

Minor criticisms can be aimed at repetitiveness in the description and illustration of silver methods for axons, and at the colour plate of the frontispiece. This adds little or nothing to the monochrome illustrations in the text, and does not seem to justify its additional cost.

D. G. F. HARRIMAN


The author of this book on low back pain is an American neurosurgeon who now devotes most of his time to this problem, and the book largely reflects medical practice in the United States—emphasizing removal of iophendylate after myelography with no mention of water soluble contrast media, and warning of possible lawsuits for failure to warn patients about the sexual consequences of surgery.

The book in many ways is a personal statement, drawing on the author's considerable experience and is profusely illustrated. There are useful sections on the conservative management of patients with back pain and sciatica, and on the newer, largely unproven, methods of treatment such as discosy with chymopapain or collagenase, prolotherapy, facet rhizotomy, and dorsal column stimulation.

British neurosurgeons who have in their practice a number of patients with persistent pain after surgery, often performed elsewhere, may turn to this book hoping for sound advice on the place of repeat lumbar exploration, on the advisability of deroofing root canals or doing a complete laminectomy, on the place of fusion of the lumbar spine, but most will receive confirmation of their own feeling that the problem of ‘recurrent disc’ has no easy solution. Spinal dysraphism is not mentioned in this book; indeed, spina bifida has only one page reference in the index and this is wrong. The neurosurgeon will also be likely to feel that the order in which spinal tumours are discussed could usefully be inverted and it is surprising to find no mention of ependymoma of the cauda equina.

The more general reader of this book will be dismayed to find back pain related to pregnancy and pelvic disease relegated to ‘uncommon causes’ alongside obturator entrapment neuropathy and to find no mention of urinary tract infection in the differential diagnosis of backache.

Two errors which require urgent amendment are the illustration on page 22 which shows the tendon of psoas major crossing anterior to the inguinal ligament and the statement on page 296 that 241 wound infections in 1,000 disc operations represents a rate of 2.41%.

There is helpful advice and information in this book but it is unlikely to become a work of reference.

J. DOUGLAS MILLER


Although Erikson was not one of the contributors to this valuable new addition to the literature on adolescent psychiatry, his thinking and writing have clearly influenced the majority of the contributors to an extent which clearly acknowledges the importance of his work in this field.

Joseph C. Schoolar, the editor, must be praised for his skill in bringing together in this symposium volume distinguished authors and a wide range of topics which on the one hand study in depth some of the problems particular to adolescence while on the other hand offer a broad backcloth of social, cultural, and economic factors relevant to this generation of adolescents and their parents.

A good book can stand criticism, a bad one doesn’t warrant it. On the whole there is little to criticize but perhaps those authors, however distinguished, who frequently preface a particular concept with the words ‘so-called’ should be wary of such an expression unless they make it quite clear that they fully understand the concept. British readers may question the relevance of some chapters to our own scene but we should remember that we have our own developing black and immigrant ghettos and similar types of poverty and social deprivation. Finally, as Dr Schoolar himself says, there are omissions due to limitations of time and space in this otherwise excellent book.

JAMES D. TEMPLETON


This book sets out to record the efforts of behaviour therapists to extend the range of their treatment in the child-clinical-field over the years 1962–72. The editors have selected 28 papers from various journals to give as comprehensive a coverage as possible. This is at once the strength and weakness of the book. On the one hand their choice illustrates the determina-