MIGRAINE: EVOLUTION OF A COMMON DISORDER  By
Oliver Sacks. (Pp. 220; illustrated; £1.60.) Faber
This is a second and slightly shortened edition of the
work published in 1971. It brings a fresh approach to
the subject by viewing it in biological rather than
limited medical terms. Under the heading ‘the experience
of migraine’, the enormous variety of
signs and symptoms which can constitute an attack
are discussed. This is a valuable collection of clinical
experience. It provides not only descriptions of
the established varieties of migraine, but also examples
of the diagnostic borderlands, the migraine equiva-

cents. In a second section entitled ‘The occurrence of
migraine’ the factors which induce an attack are
considered. The author sees these as essential
biological situations, not simply as limited environ-
mental factors, whether internal or external; though
these must play their part. He also disputes the
importance of genetic factors, pointing out alternative
explanations even when migraine clearly runs in
families. In a last section on ‘therapeutic approaches’,
specific drug treatment, both preventative and
curative of a given attack, is discussed. The author
emphasizes particularly the value of psychotherapy.
His general viewpoint is in many ways Meyerian
psychobiology brought up to date.
This book is a useful clinical treatise on migraine.
It also displays a facility of exposition and an
appreciation of the wider values of life which make it
educative and entertaining reading.
C. W. M. WHITTY

THE SURGERY OF THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM  By
The appearance of this book, written by one of the
world’s leading neurosurgeons, has been eagerly
awaited, ever since it was known that such a volume
was being prepared. With characteristic precision
and clarity, qualities which are apparent on every
page, the author describes this work as a textbook
for postgraduate students. He tells us in his preface
how he himself sought in vain for a book which
would guide him at the time of his first apprenticeship
in neurological surgery 40 years ago. Today’s
trainees in this field will have cause to be grateful
for Mr Northfield’s perception of this lack, for his skill
in accumulating his material, and for his massive
industry in producing this work. Colleagues in
related disciplines have assisted in its preparation,
but this is essentially a one-author book. The empha-
sis throughout is on basic scientific principles,
pathology, careful clinical examination, and evaluation
of current methods of treatment. Descriptions
of the technical minutiae of operative surgery are
deliberately omitted but there are helpful accounts
of the main steps in the operations practised by the
author. There are numerous illustrations, some in
colour. At the end of each chapter is a very full list of
references. Although the book is designed primarily
for those entering upon a career in neurosurgery,
it will surely also become a standard work of reference
for doctors practising in other fields. Despite its
high price this volume is excellent value for money.
It is a credit to all that is best in British surgery,
and deserves to be widely read.

P. R. R. CLARKE

ANAESTHESIE MIT GAMMA-HYDROXYBUTTERSÄURE  By
W. Bushart and P. Rittmeyer. (Pp. 93; illustrated;
A colloquium on experimental and clinical aspects
of anaesthesia with gamma-hydroxybutyric acid was
held at Hamburg-Eppendorf in October 1970. The
importance of avoiding side-effects by the use of
other drugs is again stressed. In spite of evidence of
stimulating effects on the central nervous system, it is
emphasized that this drug is a genuine anaesthetic
agent. Although there is agreement that an increase
in central stimuli occurs, it is felt that these originate
in the brain-stem and that the cerebral cortex is
inhibited. Both these drugs may have some use
where a single agent is desirable—for example, in
repeated anaesthesia for burns dressings. The impres-
sion is given, however, that both should be avoided
in neurosurgical anaesthesia.

JOHN BARKE

BIOCHEMISTRY, ULTRASTRUCTURE AND PHYSIOLOGY
OF CEREBRAL ANOXIA, HYPOXIA AND ISCHEMIA
Edited by M. M. Cohen. MONOGRAPHS IN NEURAL
SCIENCE, Vol. 1. (Pp. 129; illustrated; price not
This short monograph contains chapters on the bio-
chemistry, cerebral ultrastructure and neuro-
physiological effects of experimental hypoxia and
ischaemia of the brain. It is a report of a ‘workshop’
progressing review to which is added a lecture by H.
McIlwain on the consequences of cerebral hypoxia
examined at a tissue-metabolic level. The book
contains little new material and the section on
cerebral ultrastructure is disappointing, but as a
whole, the book is a useful review of non-clinical
literature.

J. A. SIMPSON

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