of the syndrome of Parkinsonism and the clinical use of levodopa and Barbeau and his colleagues describe adverse clinical side-effects of this therapy (including a warning about the danger of levodopa in patients suffering from closed-angle glaucoma). Early experience of the combination of levodopa with a peripheral DOPA decarboxylase inhibitor is summarized. These chapters are good, but they leave the reader curious about the well-recognized oscillation in performance of patients who fail to respond to levodopa.

This book continues the tradition of excellence rapidly established by the Contemporary Neurology Series of which it is volume 8.

J. A. SIMPSON


This volume appears, rather curiously, in an American series entitled Lectures in Living Chemistry, whose editor claims, in his foreword, that it is 'charged with the nusus elan (sic) of chemical wisdom, supreme in choice of international authors, optimal in standards of chemical scholarship, provocative in imagination for experimental research, comprehensive in discussion of scientific medicine, and authoritative in chemical perspective of human disorders'. The reader should not, however, be misled by this egregiously misleading introduction. Instead, he should note that the joint authors, in their own brief introduction give a clear indication of what they intend to do and then proceed to do it. Their aim has been to present, for the benefit of medical and perhaps especially psychiatrist readers, a concise account of the development of epidemiology and of its special techniques of inquiry. These chapters are followed by three more, discussing the application of psychiatric epidemiology to the planning of mental health services, to the fuller understanding of clinical conditions and to the search for causes. The authors disclaim any attempt to cover the field comprehensively; in particular, they have refrained from reviewing the whole body of research on the epidemiology of particular conditions, such as schizophrenia or manic-depressive psychosis: nevertheless, they have in fact drawn most comprehensively on research published in Europe and America, as well as in the United Kingdom, as can be seen by scanning the 488 items of their bibliography. Their final chapter, entitled 'The impact of modern techniques' can be read with profit by every clinician, because it describes attempts to improve the reliability of psychiatric diagnosis, attempts which have had the useful 'spin-off' of throwing new light on the processes by which clinicians reach their diagnoses, and of revealing ways in which diagnostic judgements can become involuntarily biased. Later in this chapter four pages are devoted to the use of biochemical tests in screening for mental illness. While recognizing their importance in certain forms of subnormality and in some toxic and infective psychoses, the authors acknowledge that there is a dearth of established biochemical correlates of most mental disorders. The chapter ends with references to the use of computers in data analysis, to multivariate analysis, and to mathematical models of disease, all of which are perhaps too brief to be very enlightening. In summary, this is a well-documented and clearly presented introductory textbook in its field which can be recommended to every psychiatrist who wants to know what epidemiological psychiatry is all about—and perhaps especially to every trainee aspiring to membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

G. M. CARSTAIRS

BOOKS RECEIVED


