Book reviews


It must be difficult to work in neurology without having some interest and personal views on speech and its disturbances, but it is to Norman Geschwind and his collaborators that we owe the present active interest in aphasiology, and in the disconnection theories of Liepmann, stimulated by the split-brain experiments of Sperry and his co-workers. This book, volume 16 of the Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, gathers together the best of Professor Geschwind's papers up to 1973. Particularly valuable are the introductory notes placing papers in the context of his developing views, and of papers subsequent to their original publication. This is a beautiful book which the reviewer finds necessary for frequent referral.

J. A. SIMPSON


Facial and manual gesture enhance oral communication. In conversation, direct visual contact will reveal nuances of meaning which might otherwise remain hidden. Similarly, the hearer's gestural signals will indicate to the speaker whether or not his meaning has been understood. This constitutes what is largely subconscious silent language. In the theatre, in rhetoric, and in various private sectors of society gestural language has become conscious and formulated. In some instances it has been used as a means of secret communication, in others it has become an art form.

Dr Critchley, the doyen of aphasiologists, has prepared a Baedeker to the unspoken forms of language. He touches briefly upon the cortical localization of gesture and discusses the disorders of these supplementary forms of communication in various diseases. He also explores the relationship between gesture and speech. In the major part of the book he systematically surveys and analyses the subconscious and conscious gestures of social intercourse, painting, drama, dance, occult symbolism, mythology, secret societies, and so on.

The book is enlivened by some fascinating illustrations, and, like Alfred Hitchcock, Dr Critchley appears incognito in various roles. Without belittling the serious purpose of the work, its sheer enjoyableness must not be neglected. It is a book into which one can dip repeatedly, and this is a credit to Dr Critchley's light touch; the argument is illuminated by wide ranging examples which reflect his scholarship and taste. He appears to be equally familiar with the hand language of the Balinese temple dancer, and with the signals of the tick-tack man at the dogtrack.

IVAN T. DRAPER


The epilepsies, like the poor, are always with us. Those who have worked in special clinics for the epileptic disorders over many years may be forgiven for thinking at times that they seem to have to run hard just to stay in the same place. They may even suspect that they retropulse a little from time to time. The riches that this particular volume bring to the subject deserve full notice. So much of value and utility has been compressed into 450 pages, ranging from a profound analysis of the epilepsy problem at neuronal circuit level and at the neurochemical level, to a detailed analysis of the pharmacology of the anti-epileptic drugs. The latter would, of course, be expected from any publication bearing the Woodbury name. The emphasis which is placed on the brain circuits involved in seizure discharge, and not merely on the site of origin of discharge, is a foremost consideration in the book.

The chapter on comprehensive management of the individual patient is commendable. It is appropriate to be reminded that it is people with seizures, and not cases of epilepsy or even EEGs, that are to be managed. All physicians and surgeons involved with epilepsy are adjured to have awareness of the limitations of drug treatment, and of the hazards of drug treatment, and not to pitch their therapeutic expectations too high. Some often neglected points of medical therapy are well reviewed.

The book is easy to manage even if the style is a little compressed at times. There is a scatter of misprints including one which destroyed the sense of a sentence completely. The statistics of the book include a 141 item glossary of terms, a list of upwards of 600 references up to 1972, and a 17 page index. This is an excellent review of the subject which will benefit workers in both clinical and research

This is an expensive book; but all books published outside Great Britain are going to be expensive now, on account of the low value of the pound. Nevertheless, it is a lot of money to have to pay the account of a symposium. For sympsia present up to date information, and so within a year or two, they will be, one hopes, out of date.

This symposium contains an important review article by Professor Iggo on pain receptors. Professor Sicuteri and his group present their views on the biochemistry of bases of headache and cardiac pain. There is an excellent paper on 'The appraisal of pain surgery' by Masques and Pagni. Their review of techniques and results of the surgical division of the 5th nerve for trigeminal neuralgia brings many older, and more recent, neurosurgical and anatomical facts together; it should be read by any neurosurgeon embarking on one of these operations. Equally good is their appraisal of chemical rhizotomy. Professor Moricca gives an account of his treatment of pain in advanced cancer by neuroadenolysis. This is the injection of alcohol through the sella turcica via the transthyroidal-sphenoidal sinus route. He has now had over 10 years' experience of this method of treating generalized pain in the late stages of cancer. It is successful for all cancer pain, not only for that of hormone-dependent neoplasms. In a certain number of cases of hormone-dependent neoplasms, in addition to the relief of pain, there is regression of the neoplasm. The effect of the alcohol is not only on the pituitary, but also on the hypothalamus.

IAN D. MELVILLE


This book, the Proceedings of the Fourth International Neurobiological Symposium in Magdaburg 1973, is in English, the majority of papers being translated. They vary in clarity and precision. Some quote experiments without proper protocols so that critical assessment is impossible. Few have any summary of their message. In those translated, meaning is sometimes a little serrated, as if the communication machine had a cog or two missing.

The earlier title for these biennial symposia was 'neuropharmacological'—a correct description of the majority of papers in the present volume. Of 45 contributions, only a dozen are directly concerned with memory, though most have some connection via the function of neuronal formations known or thought to subserve memory. Experimental findings are mainly in rodents, where 'learning and memory' are more readily interchanged. Some are just relevant or extrapolatable to the problems of human memory: but the difficulties of transferring work on memory (even more than on pain) from animal to man re-