Book reviews

SYSTEM DISORDERS AND ATROPHIES. Parts 1 and 2. Vols. 21 and 22 of HANDBOOK OF CLINICAL NEUROLOGY Edited by P. J. Vinken and G. W. Bruyn. (Vol. 21—pp. 636; illustrated; Dfl. 220.00; Vol. 22—pp. 586; illustrated; Dfl. 206.00.) North-Holland: Amsterdam. 1975.

As this monumental enterprise nears completion (and already it is necessary to add editorial notes on publications subsequent to earlier volumes or submission of manuscripts), we come to two volumes which must have caused great difficulties for the editors (assisted by J. M. B. V. de Jong and H. L. Klawans). With some exceptions, earlier volumes have covered aspects of neurology with which most experienced neurologists have some familiarity from personal experience, or from application of well understood diagnostic principles. But how many would be equally confident with the system disorders and atrophies—even an agreed terminology is lacking and this is the realm of eponyms and the bizarre mixtures of nuclear or tract 'degenerations', the neurocutaneous syndromes, the linkages with retinopathy, deafness, renal and skeletal abnormalities with a new combination to perpetuate the names of those who think it worth describing yet another. Let the generalist smirk about stamp collectors. These lovingly described patients are the bricks waiting for an inspired architect—or for the chemist who can tell us what characterises one neurone from another. There are tantalising hints as in Refsum's disease and the α -lipoproteinaemias but is it too much to hope that if a 25-volume *Handbook of Neurology* is ever again attempted there will be at least one volume on biochemical disorders of the CNS?

Most of the disorders described are clearly genetic and so, supposedly, biochemical. But is it really valid to describe various forms of inheritance under a common rubric? Although the reviewer's instinct is to look for general principles and similarities rather than differences (and the editors admit to being reluctant splitters) it is certain that the lumping approach should follow the splitting, not replace it. Re-dealing the pack may give a small slam. The editors were wise, then, to give free scope to their chosen contributors to develop their theories in their own ways, and even to permit more than one chapter on certain important problems such as motor neurone disease. In reviews of earlier volumes we have criticised the amount of repetition: in this pair it is inevitable and even desirable. It is interesting to

note the different uses made of the same literature by authors of different convictions. These volumes are worth having for the references alone. (They are not difficult to find. We have not previously remarked on the commendable idea of indicating the situation of the chapter's references at the foot of each page.)

In an area of neurology in which we are all beginners, these volumes are the collected experience of our colleagues of all countries since the art of systematic recording of clinical and pathological observations began. Regrettably the camera came later: soon we will need the data retrieval computer.

J. A. SIMPSON

SCHIZOPHRENIA: A MULTINATIONAL STUDY (Pp. 150; illustrated; Sw.fr.16) WHO: Geneva. 1975.

This paper-back, condensed from a large and more expensive WHO publication, presents in eminently readable form an account of the initial evaluation phase of the International Pilot Study of Schizophrenia (IPSS). The IPSS involved the psychiatric diagnosis, by relatively objective means, of 1202 psychiatric patients, most of them schizophrenics, in nine different countries. The results show that patients with schizophrenic, manic, and depressive psychoses occur, with generally similar symptomatology, in all nine countries. The IPSS also demonstrates that international epidemiological studies of psychiatric disorders are now possible.

The design and execution of the project are described very clearly. There is also a lucid critical discussion of many of the theoretical issues, including the concept of schizophrenia itself. The book is essential reading for anyone interested in social psychiatry or in epidemiology. It can be recommended most warmly.

J. L. GIBBONS

I MENINGIOMI INTRACRANICI By S. Fasullo and D. Raimondo (Pp. 134; illustrated; price not stated.) Casa Editrice Idelson: Naples. 1974.

This fairly slim volume represents a fairly extensive review of the literature on intracranial meningiomas and is written in Italian. It does not contain a summary either in Italian or in other languages. In the introduction there are some historical considerations with brief mention of reports of a probable meningiomas from 3400 BC to the last century. There is a brief discussion on views about aetiology of meningiomas and on their classification. The histolo-