Recent Advances in Myology Proceedings

of Third International Congress on Muscle Diseases, Newcastle upon Tyne 15-21 September 1974. Edited by W. G. Bradley, D. Gardner-Medwin, and J. N. Walton. (Pp. 578; illustrated; \$74.96/Dfl 180.) *Excerpta Medica*: Amsterdam. 1975.

This volume comprises over 60 papers along with the proceedings of workshop presentations at the Third International Congress on Muscle Diseases in 1974. The congress had been designed to focus attention on the outstanding problems in neuromuscular diseases, to record the recent advances in knowledge and in techniques of investigation, and to air many of the current controversies on the aetiology of the muscular dystrophies and other neuromuscular disorders. The volume contains the combined opinions of many of the foremost researchers in this field and, as befits a condition whose aetiology has eluded all investigators, particular prominence is given to presentations dealing with the aetiology of the muscular dystrophies. As might have been expected, the controversies remain unresolved, but the student of neuromuscular diseases will find arguments for and against the various hypotheses succinctly stated and discussed.

There are sections dealing with the biochemistry, histochemistry, mechanism of myogenesis, the current state of research in myositis, myotonia, myasthenia gravis, and the spinal muscular atrophies. The amount of scientific data is impressive, and the work reported is both stimulating and at times provocative. The student of neuromuscular diseases will find this volume invaluable in summarising the most up-to-date research in that field, and should not be surprised to learn that the light is not yet visible at the end of the tunnel leading to an understanding of the cause of neuromuscular diseases. Perhaps someone has pointed the way.

This book can be thoroughly recommended.

J. P. BALLANTYNE

3rd Symposium on Neuromuscular Disorders Edited by Zdenek Nesvadba

(Pp. 284; illustrated; price not stated.)
Balnea: Praha. 1976.

Although 2½ years have passed since this symposium was held in Prague, the book will undoubtedly be useful to all those interested in neuromuscular

disease. There are many distinguished contributors from Europe and Northern America, and the volume contains information sometimes not readily available in the current literature and occasionally unreported elsewhere. The topics covered include physiology, pathology and morphology of muscle, muscle spindles, epidemiology and genetics of muscle disorders, and there are special sections on spinal muscular atrophy and the myotonic disorders. Printed in paperback on dull, restful paper, in a size to fit the pocket, it does justice to the majority of the illustrations, only a proportion of electron micrographs being inadequately reproduced.

There are useful maps of the innervation zone of many human muscles, which may tempt some to make motor-point biopsies in unusual (and diagnostically useful) sites. Muscle specialists will wish to possess or at least consult this volume.

D. G. F. HARRIMAN

Monographs on Anesthesiology 3.
Muscle Relaxants By R. L. Katz. (Pp.

401; illustrated; \$49.95.) Excerpta Medica: Amsterdam. 1975.

This book is the third in a series of monographs on anaesthesiology edited by Dr. Katz who is renowned in this subject. As one would expect, most of the contributors are American anaesthesiologists and pharmacologists. All are experts in the field of neuromuscular transmission and inevitably there is overlap; a different viewpoint is useful and adds to the quality of the contents.

The book is directed towards anaesthetists and covers the physiology and pharmacology of neuromuscular blockers and anticholinesterases; it includes at least two separate accounts of the uptake, distribution, and excretion of these drugs. Anaesthetists will be especially interested in the chapters on clinical considerations in the use of muscle relaxants and on their interaction with volatile anaesthetic agents as well as their special use in obstetrics and paediatrics. Neurologists also may find interest in the chapter on the use of electromyography for evaluation of the response to muscle relaxants. Dr. Francis Foldes writes an excellent account of myasthenia gravis which

includes the care of the myasthenic surgical patient and the management of emergencies.

Errors and misprints are all too common even for a first edition. The bibliography in each chapter is extensive which makes it a very useful reference book but at a cost of £20 most people will think carefully these days before buying it.

JOHN BARKER

Topics in Therapeutics 2 Edited by Paul Turner. (Pp. 227; £6.00.) Pitman Medical: Tunbridge Wells. 1976.

Topics in Therapeutics 2 contains the proceedings of a conference held at the Royal College of Physicians of London in November 1975. The clinical subjects are grouped under four headings—infectious diseases, malignant disease, neurological disorders, and psychiatric disorders—and there is a section devoted to the controversy surrounding prescription by brand or generic names. These short and clearly written accounts should bring us up to date in subjects outside our immediate speciality. By reference to the section on neurology, one may judge the relevance and topicality of the material selected by the editor. Parkinsonism, abnormal movements and spasticity, anticonvulsants, migraine—very little here that will be unfamiliar to the practising neurologist, yet there can be few who would wish to modify these well-presented reviews. On the Goulstonian lecture on oral anticoagulants Professor Breckenridge assesses the various trials upon which our attitudes are based and defines new criteria for subsequent drug trials.

This is a commendably up-to-date and orthodox view of selected therapeutic topics. For day-to-day use it is made less valuable by the absence of an index.

I. T. DRAPER

Growth and Development of the Brain

Nutritional, Genetic and Environmental

Factors Edited by M. A. B. Brazier.
(Pp. 399; illustrated; \$28.50.) Raven
Press: New York. 1975.

The International Brain Research Organisation has recently sponsored symposia on neurosciences in addition to organising brain 'workshops' in developing countries. The first of these

symposia was held in October 1974 in New Delhi and considered growth and development of the brain, and the proceedings are now presented under the editorship of Dr. Mary Brazier. Contributions include a number from well-known research workers from Europe and North America, as well as less well-known, including some from India and Iran.

Topics include very full and helpful reviews of morphological, biochemical and neurophysiological aspects of brain maturation, as well as a detailed account of the effects of human malnutrition. It is these reviews rather than the accounts of contributors' original work which are most valuable to those seeking a recent perspective of this very important field.

Rajalakshuni is rather cautious in his paper on 'Factors affecting psychological development in man' in extrapolating from the intellectual deficits seen as a result of extreme malnutrition (for example, kwashiorkor) to populations where nutritional intake is thought to be sufficiently inadequate to influence birth weight. He concludes that, in India, the evidence studied so far does not suggest that the mental development of well children differs significantly according to their nutritional status. In a final provocative paper with a title more like a banner headline from a daily tabloid 'U.S. poverty impact on brain development' a group from the Universities of California (San Diego and Berkeley) conclude that as many as 10% of the population of San Diego County 'are seriously undernourished according to our criteria relating to brain jeopardy'. (Symbionese Liberation Army, please note.)

JOHN WILSON

Aids to the Examination of the Peripheral Nervous System Medical Research Council Memorandum No. 45. (Pp. 62; illustrated; 80p.) Her Majesty's Stationery Office: London, 1976.

For 35 years *Aids to the Investigation of Peripheral Nerve Injuries* has been the most useful guide available for the examination of patients with neuromuscular disease. Prepared by the Medical Research Council in wartime, it was primarily intended for use in connection

with nerve injuries. The new title reflects its wider use, and opportunity has been taken to revise the text and captions, to introduce new illustrations, and to replace photographs. Provided that the user is aware of the more common anatomical variables—so called anomalous innervation—and meticulously follows the methods illustrated, this guide will remain essential for every neurologist. The nomenclature has been updated.

J. A. SIMPSON

EEG Instrumentation and Technology By E. T. Richey and Richard Namon. (Pp. 206; illustrated; \$22.50.) Charles C. Thomas: Springfield, Illinois, 1976.

This book cannot be compared with standard works such as *EEG Technology* (2nd Edition) by Cooper, Osselson, and Shaw (Butterworths). The instrumentation described is of 1950 vintage, and the style in the tradition of Baedeker: 'Do not attempt to operate or troubleshoot a piece of smelling or smoking equipment', with the fatherly advice 'The manufacturer will be willing to help since the equipment will not have been paid'.

Elementary EEG technology is carefully explained but frequently oversimplified to the point of imbecility, and there is a quite unwarranted emphasis on localising tumours—a job much better left to the EMI scanner—whereas the proper domain of electroencephalography is the study of cerebral function.

H. R. A. TOWNSEND

The Responsive Brain By W. C. McCallum and J. R. Knott. (Pp. 272; illustrated; £10.00.) John Wright & Sons Ltd.: Bristol, 1976.

The unresponsive brain is surely no brain at all! The reader might therefore expect from the title a wide-ranging review of all the ways in which the brain can transmute stimuli into action or stored information. The editors can hardly be blamed for preferring their eye-catching title to the true one: 'The Proceedings of the Third International Congress on Event-related Slow Potentials of the Brain', but they conceal that the responsiveness refers to a very limited aspect of the electrical activity of the brain, made dimly visible by very special techniques.

In the main this congress was about the slow potential changes which can be

detected on the scalp between two stimuli, the first a warning, and the second requiring a response; in other words, the Contingent Negative Variation, discovered by Grey Walter and his colleagues a dozen years ago. The properties of other slow potentials related to movement and to sensory stimuli are described, in particular those of the so-called P-300, which is a positive deflection occurring around that number of milliseconds after a sensory stimulus; the interrelationship of these components is involved and was then unresolved.

As with all congress reports, the basic material of this book is the presentation, of varied weight and length, by the individual speakers. However, the organisers and editors have done a first class job in welding them into something like a logical exposition of the subject. The references have been amalgamated into a single extensive bibliography. In short, an invaluable book to those working in this field.

W. A. COBB

GABA in Nervous System Function Edited by E. Roberts, T. N. Chase, and D. B. Tower. (Pp. 554; illustrated; £14.00.) Raven Press: New York, 1976.

The volume records the proceedings of a workshop held in February 1975. The contributors circulated their manuscripts before the meeting and subsequently revised them for publication in this volume. The result is a comprehensive and authoritative review of the 'state of the art'. The material includes the synthesis, synaptic inactivation, and degradation of GABA in the nervous system; immunohistochemical visualisation, subcellular localisation, and regional distribution in the CNS; electrophysiological actions of GABA in invertebrate and vertebrate neurons; the characterisation of GABA receptors; clinically orientated chapters on the role of GABA in epilepsy and extrapyramidal disease; and a discussion of possible means of manipulating brain GABA in man. The problem is that few tools are available for safe use in patients, and there is none which selectively affects GABA in one part of the brain but not another. However, when such drugs are synthesised their use will be based on the basic information on GABA in the CNS represented