Book reviews

Medical Neurology Second Edition. By John Gilroy and John Stirling Meyer. (Pp. 777; illustrated; £14.00.) Baillière Tindall: London. 1975.

When I started this review, I became so irritated with small errors, misprints, and missing references that I was tempted to put the book away. But presumably it is not going to be used as an elementary text and the sophisticated reader will readily spot the errors. It seemed more appropriate to keep it on my desk to see how it coped with the problems of clinical practice and teaching. From that test it emerges surprisingly well. Indeed my respect for the book has grown steadily. It tackles the subject as a clinician would, and gives a more 'dynamic' picture of neurological disease than most of its rivals. Naturally the areas of special interest of its distinguished American authors are well served but some subjects, notably dysphasia and syringomyelia, are disappointingly poor, and the discussion on nerve conduction requires revision. It is a pity to return to errors but these should have been eradicated in a second edition. With more careful editing this could be the best book in its field—more than an introductory text, less than a handbook, and a useful guide to the practice of neurology.

J. A. SIMPSON

Paediatric Neurology for the Clinician

By N. Gordon. (Pp. 280; £7.50.) Spastics International Medical Publications. Heinemann Medical Books Ltd: London. 1976.

For neurologists whose interest and clinical practice is mostly confined to adults, there is a clear need for a succinct account of problems in paediatric neurology—not only to provide a working guide (since most neurologically handicapped children grow up) but also to identify the limits of their knowledge and experience. Although I think Neil Gordon's book is primarily aimed at paediatricians and community physicians in child health, it certainly fulfils

this need. It is an unembellished account provided by someone well-grounded in traditional neurology. At the hands of some others this opportunity has proved a sterile self-fulfilling exercise, but Dr. Gordon has succeeded in compiling a text which also provides a sensitive acknowledgement of the psychological, educational, and social impact of neurodevelopmental disorders. Introductory chapters discuss neurological examination and presenting symptoms and signs. The commonest problems—epilepsy, cerebral palsy, congenital malformations, mental subnormality, specific learning disorders, and locomotor disorders—each has a chapter, while the remaining chapters are devoted to hereditary diseases, degenerations, neurosurgical conditions, neurological complications of general medical diseases, and emotional disorders. A helpfully selective bibliography is included in each chapter. The book can be well recommended.

JOHN WILSON

Hypothalamus, Pituitary and Aging

Edited by Arthur V. Everitt and John A. Burgess. (Pp. 787; illustrated; \$49.50.) Charles C. Thomas: Springfield, Illinois. 1976.

This substantial monograph, by 38 authors, is concerned with the endocrinology of aging. Though some external factors, such as restriction of food and irradiation, are known respectively to lengthen and shorten the life span, the causative significance of changes in the internal environment associated with aging is far from clear. The book attempts to explain aging in endocrine terms, but the distinction between cause and effect is not always convincingly made. Chapter 33, by R. C. Adelman, describes hormone-dependent changes in liver enzymes with senescence, and suggests that there may be an age-dependent hormonal regulation of target cell gene expression—an interesting effect of possible hypothalamic senescence. The role of the

pituitary gland, which appears to secrete both aging and life-maintaining substances, is described in several chapters. It is disappointing, however, not to be given a fuller account of the pathology of the pituitary gland in the important syndrome of progeria. A fascinating description by B. C. Wexler of a custard syndrome in the explosive aging of salmon that follows spawning and precedes death convincingly illustrates the aging effect of adrenal hypercorticalism in a context of comparative endocrinology; yet ACTH has conflicting effects, in that it retards the aging of bone but also promotes atherosclerosis in man and laboratory animals. Loss of hypothalamic inhibitory control is demonstrable with aging, but the mechanism underlying such decompensation remains elusive.

The 34 chapters include much of interest to geriatricians and endocrinologists to whose libraries this could be a useful, though not inexpensive, addition.

C. S. SPALDING

Structure of the Autonomic Nervous System By G. Gabella. (Pp. viii+249; illustrated; £9.80.) Chapman and Hall: London. 1976.

This book deals with the subject indicated in the title with special emphasis on microscopy including electron microscopy and histochemistry. It is mainly devoted to the peripheral nervous system. Within the central nervous system the origins of preganglionic nerves are described, but the pathways through which activity of preganglionic nerves may be determined are not regarded as within the scope of the book. The bibliography is extensive and, like the book, extends to many different species. Most of the work refers to the usual experimental mammals, but man, reptiles and birds are not neglected. Pathological conditions, however, are not dealt with. It will provide a valuable source book.

J. M. K. SPALDING