Book reviews

A Textbook of Neurology Sixth edition By H. Houston Merritt. (Pp. 961; illustrated; £18.20.) Henry Kimpton: London, Lea and Febiger: Philadelphia. 1979.

Merritt's *Textbook of Neurology* is one of the best medium-sized books on the subject. In just under 1000 pages it covers the major diseases and most of the obscure conditions that any neurologist will encounter. Many of the sections are brief and the reader is not overwhelmed by unnecessary detail. It is not the conventional introduction to neurology for beginners with a description of the methods of examination and a resumé of the anatomy and physiology. From the first page one plunges into solid, factual information without any preliminaries.

Accepting the inevitable delays of publication it is remarkably up to date and most of the current issues in clinical neurology are considered. It is a multi-author book, although Merritt's hand remained firmly in control. I was particularly impressed by the section on cerebrovascular disease by James F. Toole with its thorough and workmanlike methods of approaching the problem, of tackling the emergency, and managing the long-term aspects of the illness.

The contents are grouped according to pathological processes rather than on an anatomical or symptomatic basis. This is logical, but any method has its deficiencies. For example, I could not find any information on the Holmes-Adie syndrome. Aphasia, dysphasia, or speech disorders do not appear in the index.

Dr Merritt was a notable teacher—38 members of his staff became the heads of neurology departments at other medical schools and hospitals. This book is an eloquent memorial to him.

I. T. DRAPER

microscopy enthusiasts and also to promote enthusiasm among diagnostic pathologists and clinicians. There is some diversity which begins with an account of the resources devoted to electron microscopy by the United States Administration from 1966 to 1978. This short chapter deals with most of the problems which arise internationally when the establishment of a new EM unit is contemplated and shows how a carefully planned network of properly funded EM services can lead to optimal efficiency: the rashes of EM units which have occurred throughout the affluent Western world have not been so rationalised. This chapter should be read by those concerned with planning of service and research facilities.

The bulk of the book is concerned with the applications found for EM in diverse fields. Chapters on liver, haematopoietic system, ophthalmic pathology, the urinary bladder, gynaecology, peripheral nerves, and the central nervous system form a mixed bag but all the chapters are good. Each is written by acknowledged experts who have condensed these subjects admirably.

Unfortunately, for readers of this Journal, the last two chapters on peripheral and central nervous systems are probably more compressed than others, diminishing the detail which would be appreciated by EM buffs but making very good reading for those becoming initiated into these areas. A measure of the quality of these chapters as reviews is that the authors' own references contribute only about 10% of the literature cited. The references seem to have been carefully chosen as source material.

This book together with volume 1 of the series should be considered for any pathology or electron microscopy departmental library. The quality of production is high.

DAVID DOYLE

Diagnostic Electron Microscopy Volume 2 Edited by Benjamin F. Trump and Raymond T. Jones. (Pp. 401; illustrated; £24.00.) John Wiley and Sons: Chichester. 1979.

This is the second volume in a series which is intended for electron

The Neurophysiological Aspects of Human Mental Activity Second edition By N. P. Bechtereva. (Pp. 181; illustrated; £8.95.) Oxford University Press: Oxford. 1979.

This small but well-printed and well-illustrated book is intended primarily for physiologists, psychologists, neurophysiologists, pathologists, and neurologists interested in brain function. The second edition covers a wider range of investigations with appropriate electrodes implanted in the human brain with the hope of important therapeutic developments. Clinical application of experimental biofeedback methods combined with therapeutic electrical stimulation may "facilitate an optimum use of brain reserves" in chronic diseases of the brain. The general trend in the various chapters is somewhat didactic with questions and answers but contains a great deal of information on the evolution of methods of investigations of various aspects of brain function. There are frequent quotations from the work of many brain scientists both in the USSR and in many other countries. Oddly enough the rich bibliography is divided up into a section on the Russian literature of some 13 pages and the non-Russian literature of 11 pages. There is a large number of illustrations, some very complex in spite of the legends.

Parts of the text include a great deal of speculation, and the reader is warned carefully about the dangers of making mental processes much more controllable in the future than is at present possible by neuropharmacological or electrophysiological means—"Deciphering the neural code would give humans true power over themselves and would make diseases affecting the code treatable."

It would be difficult to comment on each of the chapters without explaining the reasons why investigations had been carried out in a variety of ways and with a considerable range of differing displays. This is probably because some of the illustrations are part of the evolution of methods over many years of research. Perhaps when the third edition appears in a few years' time many figures will be updated and the bibliography, particularly that of the "non-Russian literature", might include references after 1972.

G. PAMPIGLIONE