Book reviews

Selected Writings of Sir Charles Sherrington Edited by D. Denny-Brown. (Pp. 532; illustrated; £15.00.) Oxford University Press: Oxford. 1979. In 1939 the guarantors of the journal *Brain* arranged for a selection of the writings of Sir Charles Sherrington to be brought together and published as a testimonial. These writings were compiled and edited by D. Denny-Brown but unfortunately, owing to the exigencies of the Second World War they only remained available for a limited period. The present reissue, with which Denny-Brown is again associated, is, therefore, especially welcome.

The material has been collected into chapters designed to provide a comprehensive selection of Sherrington's writings which have been of particular interest to neurologists but omitting material which has been dealt with at length in the *Integrative Action of the Nervous System*. Early chapters deal with motor and sensory nerve roots and spinal and bulbar reflexes. These follow sections on reciprocal innervation, postural reflexes, the motor cortex and the nature of excitation and inhibition. There is a full bibliography of Sherrington's writings up to 1938.

Although a number of Sherrington's publications including his Gifford lectures appeared after the publication of the *Selected Writings*, this volume, together with the *Integrative Action of the Nervous System* provides a comprehensive compilation of his scientific work. As such it contains the groundwork for much of our present knowledge of the nervous system to be valued by neurologists and neurophysiologists alike. The volume is elegantly produced and at a reasonable price, and the guarantors of *Brain* and the publishers are to be congratulated on its production.

J. A. R. LENMAN

Clinical Neuroimmunology By Peter O. Behan and Simon Currie. (Pp. 213; illustrated; £12.00.) W. B. Saunders: London. 1978.

This slim volume offers a readable, but unexciting account of the immunologi-

cal aspects of neurological disorders. A concise introduction, setting out current immunological views, forms a useful basis for the subsequent chapters which deal with the orthodox range of diseases in which immunological processes are considered to play a role. Topics include infectious diseases, demyelinating disorders, the Guillain-Barré syndrome, myasthenia gravis, polymyositis, slow virus infections, neurological manifestations of connective tissue disorders and neoplasia, as well as immune deficiency diseases. Experimental immunological disorders also receive attention, and a helpful glossary is provided.

Coverage of the topics is clear, factual, and concise but disappointingly superficial. The authors' approach encourages rapid reading but leaves one with the overall impression of a neurological text in which relevant immunological data have been "tacked on" to standard disease descriptions, rather than a book which illuminates the role of immunology in clinical neurology. This approach is presumably designed to try to broaden the appeal of the book to include general physicians and immunologists as well as neurologists. However, it weakens significantly the value of the book for neurological readers who may be drawn by its title to dip into its pages for answers to any but straightforward immunological questions raised by their clinical practice. Likewise, clinicians with an interest in neuroimmunology will search in vain for new ideas to stimulate them into furthering this branch of neurology. On the other hand, the book does offer quick, relatively painless injection of immunological data for overworked neurologists who may feel in need of such an injection.

ALAN RIDLEY

Taurine and Neurological Disorders Edited by A. Barbeau and R. J. Huxtable. (Pp. 468; illustrated; \$46.80.) Raven Press: New York. 1978.

This book is the result of a symposium held in Tucson, Arizona early in 1977, and includes contributions from many

of the leaders in taurine research. Taurine occurs abundantly as a free amino-acid in mammalian tissues but is not incorporated into proteins. Its high concentration in organs such as brain and heart has been known for years, but until lately little was understood of its function. Much of the activity of current research has been stimulated by the neural activity of other simple amino-acids as glycine and γ -aminobutyrate to the extent that taurine is now thought to function as a neurotransmitter, or at least as a modulator of transmission.

The editors are to be congratulated on their production of an exhaustive account of the transport and metabolism of this amino-acid in heart and brain. This is followed by thorough descriptions of its pharmacological and physiological properties. The final sections of the book are devoted to taurine and neurological disorders, with particular emphasis on the epilepsies and cerebellar ataxias. The coverage is restricted to mammals; even though taurine of interest elsewhere, it seems sensible to have concentrated in this way, since so much of clinical interest is emerging.

It is well illustrated and referenced. A most useful aid to the reader new to the field is a list of key references, separate from the references at the end of each chapter. The price is rather high for a specialist work, but it should find its way to the bookshelves of neuroscientists interested in the neuroactive amino-acids, and to clinicians involved in treatment of neurological disorders.

H. S. BACHELARD

Increased Intracranial Pressure in Children Second edition Edited by W. E. Bell and W. F. McCormick. (Pp. 485; illustrated; £21.00.) W. B. Saunders: Philadelphia, London, Toronto. 1978.

The authors, in under 500 pages of most readable and well-illustrated text, have presented a very good account of raised intracranial pressure in children. Their title is perhaps too modest an indication of their wide-ranging consideration of the topic. I hope that,