Book reviews

before dealing with particular procedures such as shunt insertion, craniotomy, cranioplasty etc and then with particular regions (frontal, occipital, spinal etc).

The text on each left hand page is illustrated by numerous (about 2,800 in total) small drawings. Unlike most illustrated operative surgery books, the small size and large number of these drawings allow each small step to be shown. Not for the reader of *this* book is there the sudden miraculous jump from scalp incision to tumour exposure or from bone exposure to prosthesis snugly in place. The book is ideal for those with limited experience—and for those whose experience is mainly in neurosurgery for adults. The cost of the book seems high (but is only about five pennies for each picture) but is equal to the cost of one valve inserted for hydrocephalus by some surgeons several times a week. It is a very sound investment for any operating theatre.

The many who remember with affection Donald Matson will be surprised to see his name on the title page. It is Dr Shillito's way of acknowledging the work and inspiration of his colleague, who died in 1969.

It is not possible to find any important fault in this atlas because it describes "the way we do it" as the preface explains. There are always other ways but these are good and well tried ones. How odd though to find that an item known around the paediatric neurosurgical world as "Ingraham-Fowler" clips has lost its commemorative eponym in this book. "A prophet is not without honour save in . . ."

KENNETH TILL

Epilepsy, Pregnancy and the Child. Edited by D Janz, M Dam, A Richens, L Bossi, H Helge and D Schmidt. (Pp 572; \$65.28.) New York: Raven Press, 1982.

One of the many problems which face clinicians managing patients with epilepsy is that of the interactions between pregnancy, epilepsy, and its drug treatment. In particular having to administer apparently teratogenic anticonvulsant drugs throughout pregnancy worries both patients and clinicians. The subject of this book is therefore of considerable practical importance.

There has recently been a great increase in the interest in epilepsy and its treatment which has been reflected in the publication of a number of books. These often arise as publications of symposium proceedings.

This book unfortunately has all the problems of such a publication. It contains contributions from those centres that have a specific interest in the interaction between epilepsy, pregnancy and the child, that is in Berlin, Montreal, Helsinki and Milan as well as some contributions from other centres of repute. The book is in a number of sections devoted to the effects of pregnancy on seizure frequency, obstetric complications in epileptic patients, anticonvulsant drug disposition during pregnancy, the incidence of foetal malformation and minor abnormalities, complications during the neo-natal period and development, and the risk and incidence of epilepsy in the offspring of epileptic parents. Each of these sections is prefaced by a usually authoritative review of the literature. This is followed by a number of reports of the experience of the individual groups. The standard of the latter is extremely variable and it is clear that many of these reports would not see the light of day other than in a publication of this sort. The major virtue of the publication lies in the reviews that it contains and more particularly in the section dealing with the incidence of foetal malformation and its possible causes in the children of epileptic patients.

The overall impression left by this book is one of disappointment. The standard of contributions is varied in the extreme and one feels that a much more concise publication could easily have been produced with a more critical editorial policy. The book nevertheless does provide a reasonably up to date account of the subject to set out to review.

D CHADWICK

Neural Substrates of Limbic Epilepsy. By Makram Girgis (Pp 191; \$42.50) Missouri: Warren H Green, 1981.

The concept of the limbic system, following a decade or two of relative hibernation, is now ripening for further development. Although Broca introduced the term "limbic lobe", it was Paul Maclean in the 1950s who clearly elaborated on the concept of a system within the brain concerned in particular with the neural elaboration of emotional states. In this book, Dr. Girgis has attempted to define and describe the neuroanatomy, neurochemistry, and neurophysiology of the limbic system, in particular choosing to concentrate on what he has termed "limbic epilepsy" as a model

for abnormalities in that system. The term is used in preference to psychomotor or temporal lobe epilepsy to emphasise the limbic nature of these disturbances, and much of the evidence from the animal literature and patients regarding the effects of disruption of elements of the limbic system on behaviour are brought together in an attempt to justify this concept.

The best sections of the book are the early ones, dealing with the anatomy and physiology of the limbic system, and that which deals with kindling. The author has tended to emphasise his own particular interests especially cholinergic mechanisms and limbic kindling at the expense of other neurotransmitters that may be involved, thus lending inappropriate bias to the overall presentation. Clinical aspects of the relationship between psychiatry and epilepsy are not well documented, and there are many statements which appear without clear substantiation from referenced literature. The last sections of the book deal with surgical treatment in limbic epilepsy, and in particular the role of stereotactic amygdalotomy in the management of both epilepsy and behaviour disorders. Again, the space allocated to these presumably reflects the author's own interest and leads the review as a whole to be rather unbalanced.

In short, a good opportunity has been missed to present a coherent picture of the concept of limbic epilepsy. Facts tend to be presented in a staccato style without the melody necessary for the reader to formulate a comprehensive picture of this important concept. Also, no critical attempt has been made to differentiate or even suggest the possibility that limbic epilepsy may not be synonymous with temporal lobe epilepsy but that only certain patients with temporal lobe epilepsy would fall into the category of those showing limbic system disturbances. In addition, in this era, to present a concept of a form of epilepsy without trying to integrate it into or discuss the International Classification of epilepsy in use is somewhat cavalier.

Finally, the publishers of this book are to be seriously berated for failing to produce a readable text. For some paragraphs the typesetting inexplicably changes, sentences are misplaced in their setting in several places, one reference to a figure in the text is merely left as 0 0 0, and one of the plates is set 90° out of line. For the high price we pay for our books I think such callous disregard of potential readers is not excusable.

M TRIMBLE