

to pay for what is quite a valuable little book of reference. I enjoyed it.

LINDSAY SYMON

Epilepsy—A Window to Brain Mechanisms. Edited by Joan S Lockard, Arthur A. Ward, Jr. (Pp 300; \$35.36.) New York: Raven Press. 1980.

This excellent volume is the record of a remarkable achievement. It is the fruit of 30 years devoted by Arthur Ward to establishing within the Department of Neurological Surgery of the University of Washington in Seattle, a multidisciplinary group researching into the basic phenomena of epilepsy in man and animals. This has led to highly important advances in our understanding of the abnormal firing patterns of single neurons in and around an epileptic focus, in knowledge of the cellular pathology of human and experimental foci, in the pharmacokinetics and dynamics and anticonvulsant drugs . . . and very much more. Throughout these endeavours Arthur Ward and his colleagues have shown a remarkable ability to dissect out basic mechanisms while never moving far from the everyday clinical problems of epilepsy. They have succeeded by a very skilful choice of animal models and by maintaining the clinical and experimental studies in a state of constant mutual interaction.

Arthur Ward and his thirteen colleagues provide us in the seventeen chapters of this volume a summary of the main lines of research that have originated in the Department in Seattle. The result is an extremely informative and stimulating book. It admirably demonstrates that studying the mechanisms of epilepsy can provide a unique insight into the organisation and pathophysiology of the brain. The achievements of Dr Ward's group make a convincing case for an academic department devoted to research on epilepsy. Neurophysiological, pharmacological, surgical, biochemical and histological techniques are all required to solve the problems of epilepsy—as is expertise in the field of epilepsy.

This volume will advance the time when there are as many University Departments of Epileptology as of Oncology or Radiology.

BS MELDRUM

Brain Failure. By Barry Reisberg. (Pp 198; \$19.95.) New York: The Free Press, 1981.

"Lucid and comprehensive, *Brain Failure* will emerge as *the* (sic) authoritative guide to all facets of senility—from diagnosis to treatment—and will be essential reading for all health care and human service professionals concerned with the needs of our ever-growing aged population."

Any medical book that sets out to achieve these goals in 198 pages is either grandiose or otiose. This book is certainly disappointing and if considered as a scientific statement, extremely disappointing. Where is the detailed historical background from which the concept of brain failure has naturally evolved? Where, indeed, is the proper definition of brain failure that should have heralded the rest of the work? Why devise a new term ("cognitive abulia") for "intellectual weakness" and then present it on page 2 (!)? Does this not merely add confusion to the synonym of senility while claiming support from the prop of severe brain failure? Other questions too numerous to mention also arise but in summary this work appears superficial, discursive, and trivial.

Could the publishers (a division of Macmillan Publishing Company) have helped? Perhaps—by making available to the author a copy of William Strunk's *The Elements of Style* (The Macmillan Company gave this ten printings in New York between 1959 and 1960) and by drawing attention to hint number 9 on page fifty-nine, "Do not affect a breezy manner".

BRIAN LIVESLEY

Advances in Epileptology. XII Epilepsy International Symposium. Edited by Mogens Dam, Lennart Gram and J Kiffin Penry. (Pp 717; \$102.) New York: Raven Press. 1981.

This volume derives from the twelfth Epilepsy International Symposium held in Copenhagen in September 1980. It does not suffer from the major faults frequently shown by preceding volumes. The contributions have been admirably edited and the book is beautifully printed and bound.

The 95 chapters are from 4-11 pages long and represent the principal invited contributions and a few selected volunteer papers. There is thus an effective thematic grouping, with a strong emphasis on drug therapy, especially the preclinical development of new drugs (12 papers), controlled

trials (11 papers), clinical pharmacology (7 papers) and drug side effects (4 papers). Other topics covered by specific symposia include education and rehabilitation (13 papers), differential diagnosis (18 papers), endocrine aspects (7 papers) and folates (7 papers). Broadly, this volume reflects the diversity of problems currently occupying the energies and compassionate concern of physicians and researchers. However, the latter group will probably find that basic science is underrepresented. Personally I would prefer a volume with fewer papers, treating their topics in greater detail.

In summary, the editors and publishers can take pride in the speed and skill with which they have given us this resumé of current activity.

BS MELDRUM

Neuroendocrinology of Reproduction, Physiology and Behavior. Edited by Norman T. Adler. (Pp 555; \$42.00.) New York: Plenum Press, 1981.

With the rise of neuroendocrinology as scientific discipline, the appearance of monographs devoted to a single aspect of the subject became inevitable. This primer is particularly welcome, for it provides an excellent survey of a topic of great significance in clinical and social medicine, and successfully achieves its aim of leading the interested reader from the chemical and biological foundations of neuroendocrinology, through the evolutionary and embryological development of reproductive systems in animals, to the physiological and biochemical control of reproductive neuroendocrinology in the adult. Considerable effort has been devoted to clarity of exposition and the delineation of principles, as illustrated by the rueful comment of HH Feder that it is unlikely that neuroendocrinologists will derive a sense of excitement from a chapter describing the structure, reactions, synthesis and measurement of steroids, although the material provides a basis for deeper appreciation of currently enthralling work on the influence of steroids upon reproductive physiology and behaviour.

The effects of hormones upon the brain are of particular interest to the neurologist and psychiatrist and the effect of steroids on the organisation of sexual behaviour, and its neurochemical control are very well covered. The cellular