

The appearance of the first two volumes of a handbook of psychiatry which is to extend to five volumes and aims to be "the comprehensive authoritative multi-authored handbook... in this country" is interesting in psychiatry. The series has close links with the journal Psychological Medicine in having Professor Michael Shepherd as its General Editor, and being planned by the International Advisory Committee of that journal. Each of the five volumes has one or two editors and a number of contributors, most of whose names will be well known to psychiatric readers. The handbook is intended to reflect the Maudsley approach to psychiatry and it is apparent from the list of contributors that most have spent some time at that institution in the course of their careers and a few have been subject to similar influences elsewhere.

The approach is indeed comprehensive. Volume I concerns General Psychopathology, covered from the historical background, through the clinical phenomena of mental disorders, to taxonomy and diagnosis, with a number of chapters in each section. Similarly, Volume 3, Psychoses of Uncertain Aetiology (even the caution of the title reflects the Maudsley influence) covers schizophrenia and paranoid psychoses; affective psychoses; and psychoses of early childhood, systematically and thoroughly. Considering the scope of the work, each volume is not a large book. There is a remarkable uniformity of style in the chapters; each is concise, detailed, and to the point. This feature suggests strong and precise editorial policies, and a choice of contributors who can work within them. The style combined with the provision of references for each chapter, grouped together at the end of the book, a comprehensive index, an author index, and a cross reference index, makes the seeking of a particular piece of information easy. As might be expected in a series written in the Maudsley tradition, the contributions refer to the literature widely but selectively; this is a most useful feature of the book. The content of the contributions is, of course, wide-ranging and authoritative. These features will make the series a major work of reference, probably unsurpassed in English language texts, but this does not always make for easy reading, as each contribution tends to contain the most mundane information as well as more complex, theoretical, speculative and up to date material. This problem is probably inescapable in a book which aims to be encyclopaedic in its approach.

On the evidence of these two volumes there can be little doubt that this major work will be a success, not only now, but as the major, authoritative and comprehensive reference work on British psychiatry for many years to come, and like its antecedents, a milestone in the development of British psychiatry. Every practising psychiatrist will want to have ready access to the Handbook, and most will find the £50 for the soft-backed version in five volumes a sound investment. The appearance of volumes 2, 4 and 5 is eagerly awaited.

RHS MINDHAM


This beautifully printed volume includes papers by 65 friends and former students and honours Henri Gastaut who is indeed the foremost example and model of an epileptologist. Under his leadership the annual "Colloques de Marseille" attracted basic scientists and clinicians from the whole world and defined the new specialty of Epileptology.

This volume by its content demonstrates the broad and varied subjects as well as specific matters that must be considered by the physician studying and treating patients with seizures. The topics are divided into eight sections: 1. Introduction 2. Predisposition to Epilepsy 3. Generalised Seizures and Epilepsies 4. Temporal lobe epilepsy 5. Miscellaneous epilepsy and other (this includes neuroradiology and CT scans) 6. Cerebral anoxia and Vascular Epilepsy 7. EEG patterns, evoked potentials and behaviour 8. Sleep and sleep related conditions. Each subject is covered by several papers which include historical reviews, experimental reports and especially clinical aspects of seizures.

Most important is the fact that Henri Gastaut did not sit idly by (which indeed would likely have been impossible for him) but contributes himself several excellent papers. Section 2 begins with a paper by Gastaut on "Benign or FUNCTIONAL (versus organic) Epilepsies in different states of Life". This is presented with various "electro-clinical" manifestations in the new-born, the infant, the child, the adolescent, the adult and the aged. Other papers by Gastaut include a review and summarisation of the condition widely known as "Lennox Gastaut Syndrome", and papers on "Temporal lobe Epilepsy" and on "Computerized Tomography in Epilepsy".

This volume, while being a particular intellectual feast for those of us who consider ourselves also Epileptologists, can be recommended for clinical neuropathologists, general neurologists, psychiatrists, paediatricians and neurosurgeons, and also to anyone interested in an up-to-date survey of Epileptology.

G PAMPIGLONE.
CARY G SUTER


This is a multi-disciplinary collection of papers dealing with the problems of the cerebral localisation of cognitive and language functions. The volume provides a comprehensive account of this topic and a critical evaluation of current research. The choice of subject matter does not have a clear rationale but basically the 21 chapters are divided into two groups. In the first are the studies dealing with the description of the methods available for the localisation of function. For instance computerised and position-computed tomography, measures of cerebral blood flow and electric stimulation, and also the description of neuro-anatomical features of the lesion responsible for the dysfunction. In the second group are those studies dealing with the localisation of the major cerebral syndromes recognised in clinical neurology. Thus six chapters are devoted to the localisation of the aphasia (Broca's, Wernicke's conduction and transcortical) alexia and agraphia. There are also other contributions describing the localisation of apraxia, the Gerstmann and the neglect syndrome. There is one further paper dealing with the behavioural changes associated with frontal lobe lesions.

In the Introduction, Dr Kertesz presents