Reviews and Notices of Books


Dr. George Hassin has long been known by repute for his numerous contributions to neuropathology, and it is fitting that he has now given us a textbook on a subject of which he is a foremost exponent. His views and theories on not a few controversial questions of neuropathology may not command universal acceptance, but at least they have the merit of originality. In this book he does not obtrude them unduly, being content rather to describe than to discuss; nevertheless he has succeeded in producing a work which has a character of its own, and which fills somewhat of a gap in the English literature of neuropathology, being larger than most primers dealing with the matter yet not unwieldy and, above all, not 'padded.'

On the whole, the presentation is worthy of the importance of the subject, though it is rather unequal; the chapters dealing with intracranial tumour, with inflammatory disease and syphilitogenous disease are excellent; that on extrapyramidal disease is not so good—it lacks the critical touch, and contains expressions of opinion with which many will not agree and for which evidence is wanting. So far as we know no one has ever claimed that athetosis 'is a lesion of the corticospinal tract'; and it is inaccurate to aver that 'torsion spasm, athetosis, and spasmodic torticollis are practically one disease-process,' or that 'for a long time they were considered functional.' To state dogmatically that Schilder's disease is a 'morbid entity' rather overlooks the fact that its processes shade off by gradations to other disease-conditions. What the author writes of the pathology of pellagra stands in need of amplification and some revision. Little is said of congenital malformations and defects beyond descriptions of a few of the best known.

The book is finely illustrated and has useful bibliographies.


The lavish standard set by Cushing and others of his school in their series of neurosurgical monographs is maintained on the continent of Europe by this equally fine production by the Swedish authority Dr. Olivecrona. The work is based on some 34 examples of the particular tumour studied, which the author divides into three groups according as the site of growth has been the anterior, middle, or posterior third of the sagittal sinus. The clinical histories are recounted at some length, each being illustrated by drawings and X-ray
photographs, etc. A synthetic study of symptomatology and differential diagnosis follows, whilst some 20 pages are taken up with surgical technique. Of 33 cases submitted to operation, 15 per cent. ended fatally, and 10 per cent. in addition from recurrences. A complete or almost complete cure was effected in 50 per cent.; in 25 per cent. it was incomplete, restricting the earning or working capacity of the patients.

Abscess of the Brain: its Pathology, Diagnosis, and Treatment.

The writer of this well-stocked monograph on brain abscess is to be congratulated on his performance. The book is based on wide personal experience of the condition with which it deals, and if the line of approach is self-evidently that of the otologist, rhinologist, or laryngologist rather than of the expert in nervous disease the fact matters little. Because of this approach the latter may think that some of the symptomatic descriptions (e.g., that of the speech disorder of left temporal lobe abscess) leave something to be desired, but at all events they are sufficiently detailed for practical purposes. Moreover, Mr. Atkinson has sought information where he can best find it, and has utilized the work of different neurologists in his accounts of cerebellar and other syndromes. The arrangement of the work is excellent, the illustrations (of which a number are in colours) are well reproduced, and statistical tables enhance the value of the book as a whole. Twenty-eight personal cases are chosen for publication at some length, and there is a good bibliography. Because of its intrinsic merits the book should have wide appreciation by both physicians and surgeons.


The first edition of this attractive book was favourably reviewed in this Journal (Vol. XII., p. 283). The second, somewhat enlarged and rewritten, impresses the reader even more than the original with the amount of information and critical examination of the tenets of different psychopathological schools that Dr. Nicole has been able to put in relatively small compass. He shows that the secrets of psychopathology are being approached to-day from analytical, neurological, psychological, physiological, and ethno-sociological standpoints, and affirms that not mere combination of such approaches, but their unification, may some day be possible. As we read the situation, that day is still somewhat remote. Instead of a multiple approach, not a few exponents of one or other line of attack scout the usefulness and deny the rationale of the remainder. Dr. Nicole himself does not perhaps clearly and
specifically indicate what his own view is—though doubtless he might regard this as of secondary importance; his purpose is to bring 'some sort of orderly disposition out of the chaos of modern theory.' In this respect he has succeeded admirably.


There is no end to the writing of textbooks on abnormal psychology in these days, when the meaning of the word 'psychology' itself seems to have almost as many facets as there are authors who employ it. No little part of this work is devoted to pure neurology, for it contains chapters on sensory and motor disorders which belong to the field of the neurologist, and this is true also, in part at least, of that entitled 'Association Mechanism.' Workers in the allied fields of neurology and psychiatry have realized for years how intimate is their connexion, and are, or should be, the last to enforce an artificial separation. But while each should know much of the other's sphere, we cannot accept the views expressed by the authors of this textbook, who baldly state that 'in its narrower meaning the function of the brain and neural pathways is outside of the sphere of neurology (sic), nor will neurologists concede their 'definition' of neurology, viz., that it 'is a study of the structure and growth of the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and receptors of the special senses.' Neurology has a vastly wider connotation, and properly so. The authors allege that in the case of 'glove anaesthesia' the neurologist can definitely say that it is not organic (they are unaware that this type of sensory loss is found also in some 'organic' forms of nervous disease); the neurologist cannot say, however, what factors are involved in producing the condition, nor prescribe the treatment to be administered, since no medicament has been discovered for treating such cases.' It is to be deplored that so singular a misrepresentation of neurology should find a place in a work of this kind.

From the standpoint of psychopathology, however, the book can be read with profit; its exposition of 'functional psychoses,' psychotherapy, and mental deficiency is satisfying and well set forth. Under the heading of Psychoneuroses we find a description of epilepsy, for no other reason, seemingly, than that the epilepsies are imagined by the writers to have a 'frequent similarity to hysterical states.' Here the authors are guilty of an unfortunate classification. Like some other psychopathologists, they lay unwarranted stress on the occurrence in cases of 'genuine epilepsy' (a misleading term) of 'certain definite personality traits' present before convulsive seizures appear. Their discussion of sleep and its basis is interesting, yet hardly does justice to some present-day physiological research; they do not make convincingly clear the relation of sleep to 'abnormal psychology.'

The latest addition to the textbooks of social biology edited by Professor Lancelot Hogben is concerned with mental defect in its varying aspects. Dr. Penrose is well qualified by experience and amount of material at disposal to deal with these, which he does in an engaging and informative manner. The chapters on systematic investigation cover all the present-day methods of study of the mental defective, and if they contain nothing novel at least they illustrate the importance of attention to detail. A good deal of trouble has been expended on exposition of analytical methods, e.g., on Mendelian ratios and gene frequencies. The author criticizes present-day classification, regarding with some favour that recently proposed by Lewis, which divides mental defectives into 'subcultural' and 'pathological' groups. 'Aetiology, pathological types, and treatment are all dealt with at some length. It is regrettable that the volume has no index to its contents, only one of names and authors being supplied. There is, however, a glossary, doubtless provided for those 'lay persons' mentioned in the preface who desire knowledge on 'some of the scientific problems associated with the study of mental deficiency.' If such persons do not know the meaning of 'morbid,' 'cutaneous,' 'occiput,' 'reflex,' and other terms obligingly defined by the author, it is absurd to imagine they are capable of understanding the 'scientific problems' to which he makes reference. Further, in some of the definitions of this glossary words are used that stand in need of definition themselves, e.g., thyroid, cortex, pituitary, pelvis, etc.—that is, if we judge by the standard of ignorance that is presumed. Again, technical terms used in the text, such as midbrain, neuroepithelioma, meningocoele, umbilical hernia, and numerous others find no place in the glossary. Why the author should cater for sciolism in a professional work of this kind we are at a loss to understand.


We can cordially recommend this treatise on the perennial problem of suicide to the notice of our readers. It is packed full of information drawn from widely differing sources; its discussions are dispassionate, its attitudes scientific. Complex factors of race, age, sex, of intrinsic personality and extrinsic circumstances, are fully analysed, and many tables add to the value of the critical dissection of the matter. There is much, too, of historical and religious significance, while the style of writing is pleasant, with literary quotations that add to the general interest of the work. The legal aspects of the question are examined, as well as those bearing on life assurance; Suicide and Mental Disease is the title of one chapter, and another is devoted to the
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preventive side of the problem. The book ends on a note of encouragement, in a chapter entitled ‘Towards Sound Mental Health.’ Numerous appendices and a good bibliography complete a most useful and comprehensive study.


Professor Bouman’s monograph on diffuse sclerosis is sure of being appreciated by students of nervous disease. It covers the field excellently in accordance with tradition by ranging from a historical introduction, through clinical and pathological descriptions, to differential diagnosis. Unfortunately, in the present state of knowledge little can be said of prognosis and treatment. Tabulated notes of 100 cases are provided in summary at the close of the book.

The author suspends judgement on the debatable point of whether the lesions are inflammatory or degenerative, though he allows that some recorded examples definitely seem to belong to the former category and others to the latter. He also provides an interesting excursus on the subject of pathogenesis and on the relation of lipoids to the dystrophic glial process. The illustrations are well reproduced and the bibliography is fairly complete.


The ‘new’ nervous syphilis of M. Ravaut has reference to the years since the beginning of the century, when cytodiagnosis of the spinal fluid opened a new world to the student of neurosyphilis. These years have witnessed many additions to knowledge of the subject, but M. Ravaut has done well in concentrating here on clinically latent or non-evident forms, disclosed only by the findings in the fluid. This aspect of neurosyphilis has engaged his attention for a very long time now, and his treatise embodies the results of his investigations. The term ‘biological neurosyphilis’ is suggested for ‘preclinical’ neurosyphilis, when only the fluid throws light on the processes that are going on. A chapter of practical importance deals with the prognosis of latent cases; a large number of statistics are cited which, combined, show that among 825 syphilitics having a negative fluid in the course of the primary disease only 20 later showed clinical or laboratory signs of nervous syphilis, or 2.4 per cent. The interpretation of positive findings in the course of latent syphilis is difficult; its prognostic meaning will depend on the age of the syphilis, previous treatments, coexisting blood reactions, etc.; an endeavour should be made to ascertain whether the finding represents the active evolution of a process or of one that is becoming extinct. This question has to be decided by the qualities of the reaction itself.