

Book Reviews

Diseases of the Nervous System. SIR FRANCIS WALSHE, M.D., D.S.C., F.R.S., F.R.C.S. Tenth edition. Edinburgh and London. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. 1963. Pp. xii + 381. Price 35s.

The tenth edition of this deservedly popular book marks its coming of age, but in spite of the widespread changes in neurological concepts and ideas since 1940, it remains essentially a practical handbook for general practitioners and students.

An interesting innovation in the present edition is a chapter on liver-brain relationships. In it, Dr John Walshe describes with clarity the effects of primary liver disease on the central nervous system, and the biochemical and neurological effects of such metabolic disorders as kernicterus, phenylketonuria, porphyria and hepatolenticular degeneration. Many chapters are modified or amplified in the light of recent developments, and there is, for example, a small section on giant-celled arteritis, the importance of which is becoming increasingly realized in general practice, since failure to recognize it may lead to unnecessary blindness. In this section, as in a few other more recent insertions, the author departs from his original intention of omitting references, and it is to be hoped that this practice will be extended in future editions.

Although some points of criticism occur, such as the retention of a whole small chapter dealing with the increasingly rare condition of bromism, the author remains true to his aim of avoiding therapeutic over-enthusiasm, or the omission of important new work. This volume continues to provide an elegant and thoughtful survey of neurology, and it is noteworthy that the lucidity of Sir Francis Walshe's prose adds considerably to the enjoyment of reading it.

Diseases of the Nervous System. LORD BRAIN, D.M., F.R.C.P. Sixth edition, London. Oxford University Press, 1962. Pp. xiii + 879. 63s.

The writer of this review must have been one of the earliest to read the first edition of this book 30 years ago. He learnt much from it then, and he has learnt much again from this sixth revised edition. As the author says, there is a growing overlap between neurology and general medicine. This overlap covers also good general practice, which is becoming more and more the practice of modern internal medicine in the setting of the patient's home.

Among the many improvements in this edition are new paragraphs on the neurological features of acute porphyria, hepatic failure, the neuro-myopathies associated with carcinomatosis and other neoplastic condi-

tions, polymyositis, collagen disorders, the effects of disturbed potassium metabolism, and on the metabolic causes of mental retardation and coma. All these are, or should be, of interest to family doctors who must come across these conditions from time to time.

Convulsions and the different forms of epilepsy are well described. Of the causes of headache osteitis of the cranial bones is put first and psychogenic headache last—an order which many practitioners will find somewhat strange. Insomnia is not mentioned in the index. Narcolepsy and catalepsy head the sleep disturbances. Only two lines are given to the symptomatic treatment of headache, and none to that of sleeplessness as such. Psychogenic giddiness comes first in the list of causes of vertigo, but some would doubt whether this is often true vertigo.

Anxiety and anxiety states, dizziness, faints, delirium (apart from delirium tremens), paraesthesiae, behaviour disorders in children and night terrors, though discussed in the text, are somewhat difficult to find quickly in a book of this size without some indication in the index as to where they can be traced.

But these are minor criticisms. All general practitioners should have this volume on their shelves as a most excellent reference book on modern clinical neurology. But its value to them would be enhanced if the index mentioned a few more of the subjects to which they often want to refer; and if a little more space were given in the text to the symptomatic treatment of the commoner and often distressing complaints, connected with the nervous system, with which so many patients come to their family doctors for immediate help.

Living with Epileptic Seizures. SAMUEL LIVINGSTON, M.D. Illinois. Chas. C. Thomas. Pp. xi + 326. Price £2 12s. 0d.

This book is described on the dust cover as a guide for all confronted with the problem of epilepsy, patients, their families, social workers, etc., and the medical profession. It is written by an experienced paediatrician who has worked with large number of epileptics and followed many of them up over some 25 years. The book is essentially American. For instance some of us would shrink from prescribing 1,000 phenobarbitone tablets at a time, and both the attitudes and facilities are different in the United States from those in Britain. The volume covers almost every aspect of the problem lucidly and in considerable detail. The author is most understanding and wise in his approach to the subject. The young epileptic should be warned he will never be able to drive a car, years before the problem actually arises. On the other hand a controlled epileptic farmer should be allowed to drive a tractor on his own land. He is very reassuring about the significance of fever convulsions and breath holding attacks. With many graphic case histories, he shows how prejudiced we still are in our attitude to this common disease, and he produces cogent arguments for a more tolerant and rational approach to the whole problem. The author diagnoses epilepsy by the exclusion of other causes of the fit, and he treats the patient as an epileptic after a single cold fit, with anticonvul-