

Book reviews

Neuroectodermal Tumours of the Central and Peripheral Nervous System By K. Scharenberg and L. Liss. (Pp. ix + 239; illustrated. £10.) Edinburgh: E. and S. Livingstone Ltd. 1969.

If the senior author of this monograph appears to do less than justice to conventional staining methods, he is to be excused because of his enthusiasm for the silver techniques with which the name of his mentor, the late Don Pio del Rio Hortega, will always be associated. Indeed the importance of this tome lies in the fact that these important techniques have been employed exhaustively—but not exclusively—in a study of 4,000 tumours of the nervous system. It will appeal particularly to pathologists and surgeons who are concerned with clinical and research aspects of neuro-oncology. When they compare their own findings with those of the authors, they may even be tempted to depart from some conventional teachings which have tended to neglect important writings of the Spanish school, so often buried as they are, in inaccessible journals.

These talented authors naturally base their classification of neoplasms on that of Hortega but differ a little from Polak's recent modification (1966). They show with some conviction that 'medulloblastomas' are in fact neuroblastomas of the cerebellum and that their cerebral counterparts (usually called ganglioneuromas) do not contain gliomatous elements ('gangliogliomas') as others have postulated in some instances. They found no examples of sarcomatous change in the stroma of any of their cases of glioblastoma and they tend to discount the likelihood of there being such a tumour as a 'gliosarcoma'. More surprising is the fact that, not doubting the existence of such a tumour, they met with no instance of a 'microglioma' (with which they would not in any case be concerned in this book although Polak included them in his classification). Their challenging technical approach throws interesting light on the natural history and structure of Schwannomas, Remak cell tumours in von Recklinghausen's disease, haemangioblastomas, gliomas of the optic nerve, tumours containing the elements of Fänanas, pinealomas, and the hamartomas and blastomatous processes met with in tuberose sclerosis, but their assessment

of the spongioblastoma polare would appear to be at variance with the generally accepted view, supported by findings in tissue culture, of Russell and Rubinstein (1963).

A particularly useful chapter deals with the value as well as the shortcomings of tissue culture in diagnosis. There is too a technical section designed to tempt the routine worker into the fuller histological life. The innumerable illustrations are mostly good and some excellent; particularly interesting are the revealing phase contrast photographs of gliomas stained with silver carbonate. The text is set out with little regard to economy of paper but it is eminently readable in spite of the use of such words as 'silver-affine', 'semi-oval center', 'dynamic gliology', 'tumorigenic', and 'cariokinesis'. If at times statements are a little dogmatic they are none the less pleasingly provocative. The paper is heavy yet some illustrations are poor or is it the reproduction? On a few pages the text shows through on to the illustrations to the detriment of both; when reprinted it is hoped that this annoyance will be eradicated.

W. H. MCMENEMEY

Tumors of the Peripheral Nervous System By J. C. Harkin and R. J. Reed. Atlas of Tumor Pathology, Second series, Fascicle 3. (Pp. 174; 196 figures. \$3.25.) Washington: The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. 1969.

This is a worthy successor to the slim but authoritative fascicle by the late A. P. Stout. It has trebled in size and in the number of illustrations including a considerable amount of new material and covers the subject fully.

Both the solitary benign tumours of nerve sheaths and the various manifestations of neurofibromatosis receive full treatment. The terminology adopted is admirable, in particular the use of the term Schwannoma in preference to the numerous more elegant but ambiguous alternatives. The differences between Schwannoma and neurofibroma are well explained with the aid of diagrammatic drawings. Syndromes related to, but not identical with, von Recklinghausen's disease are well described and defined. The difficult subject of malignant nerve sheath tumours is clearly presented and an adequate classification proposed. The borderland between nerve sheath and melanotic tumours remains as obscure as ever. The

neuroblastic and neuronal tumours are well reviewed and their terminology clarified. A clear statement on their sites of origin, including atypical ones, would be desirable: a curious omission. The chapter on 'Tumours of other tissues secondarily involving the peripheral nervous system' is so perfunctory it could have been omitted altogether.

The standard of illustrations is very high throughout. Lists of references at the end of each chapter provide a useful survey of recent work; however, they are rarely quoted in the text which makes correlation between statements and their original sources difficult. These are, however, minor flaws in an authoritative and up-to-date monograph.

H. URICK

Fibrinolysis. Chemistry, Pathology and Clinics By Y. P. Kontinen. (Pp. 643; 13 figures. No charge.) Tampere, Finland: Oy STAR Ab.

This is an extraordinary book and thus merits an unusual review. To begin with it was published in Finland in 1968 as a limited edition available free of charge. Secondly it reflects the monumental labours of its author whilst preparing a thesis—evidently a typical Scandinavian saga for which no stone remained unturned and no reference overlooked. The result is a 640-page 'Bradshaw' on fibrinolysis, of which the last 200 pages are devoted to over 4,500 references: every paragraph is festooned with superscript figures.

The literature of each aspect of fibrinolysis is surveyed. To record that the book is unreadable, though in almost impeccable English, is not to be disrespectful to the author for this work was never intended to be read. It is a comprehensive reference text and is only intelligible—indeed only of value—to someone immersed in the subject who, like the author, seeks to write a thesis. Many British graduates, if they can obtain a copy, will be grateful to Dr Kontinen, and his patient wife who sustained her husband during the years spent on accumulating all these data, for passing on to others the results of his own labour. Every fact is presented but without eclecticism; the reader must make his own judgment and the author's thoughts and experiences remain hidden. This is fair enough when relating parallel or divergent theories, but reduces the value of the textual references to laboratory methodology.