

Part III.—Epitome of Current Literature.*

1. Anatomy and Physiology.

Left-handedness in the Prehistoric Inhabitants of Alexandria [Il mancinismo nei preistorici di Castelceriolo (Alessandria)]. (*Arch. di Antropol. Crim.*, vol. lvi, p. 291, May–June, 1936.) Peola, P.

Prof. Peola starts by describing two Stone Age implements which could have been used only with the left hand. He refers to prehistoric drawings and statuettes of antiquity, and compared the stages through which children and anthropoid apes pass in the achievement of right-handedness with those depicted in the relics of antiquity. He finds a striking parallel in the following five stages :

- (1) Ambidexterity.
- (2) Transient period.
- (3) Left-handedness.
- (4) Transient period.
- (5) Predominance of right-handedness.

These stages are intimately concerned with the separation of the prehensile and locomotor functions of the four limbs, and the specialized distribution of these two functions in the upper and lower limbs respectively.

This process of differentiation necessitated the adoption of the upright attitude.

He argues that as man began to fashion tools and weapons, the left hand would be the natural one for defence while the right would be free for more active functions. He chooses the left as the side for defence because of the position of the heart on that side and the ease of access to it in an attack from the left.

H. W. EDDISON.

The Thalamus in Relation to the Cerebral Cortex. (*Journ. Nerv. and Ment. Dis.*, vol. lxxxv, p. 249, Mar., 1937.) Walker, A. E.

The thalamus is divided into three groups of nuclei. The first includes those having entirely subcortical connections, and concerned with either a phylogenetically old system (the nuclei of the mid-line and the nucleus ventralis anterior) or probably intrathalamic associations (the intralaminar nuclei). The second group (the nuclei ventralis lateralis, ventralis posterior, the anterior nuclei and the geniculate bodies) consists of those nuclei receiving fibres from the ascending sensory tracts and projecting to the cerebral cortex. The third group (the nuclei medialis dorsalis, lateralis posterior and pulvinar) receives no fibres from the great ascending pathways, but has numerous connections with the thalamic nuclei of the second group and projects to the association areas (Flechsig) of the cerebral cortex, whereas the fibres of the second group end in the projection centres of the cerebral cortex.

A study of the connections of these cortical areas gives further evidence for the conception that at least a partial synthesis occurs in the nuclei of the third group. The prefrontal area receives fibres from only the adjacent motor areas (4 and 6 of Brodmann), and sends fibres to the latter region and also the parietal cortex.

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