

## Part II.—Reviews.

**Epilepsies—Leurs Formes Cliniques : Leurs Traitements.** By L. MARCHAND and J. de AJURIAGUERRA. Paris: Desclee de Brouwer et Cie, 1948. 721 pp., including index. Price 475 francs.

It is the aim of the Bibliothèque Neuro-Psychiatrique de Langue Française to publish new works which will show that the vitality of neurology and psychiatry in Belgium, France and Switzerland has not been impaired by the interruption of the second world war. This aim is fulfilled by the present volume. Dr. Marchand has been writing prolifically on epilepsy since the turn of the century, and the book reflects a lifetime of clinical observation and intensive study of the European literature for the past 50 years. The development of our present-day knowledge of epilepsy, in its clinical and pathological aspects, is traced in detail, and all relevant contributions are critically discussed and assessed. Every physician concerned with epilepsy will read the book with benefit, and as a work of reference it will rarely fail him. The style is lucid and readable, and the closely-reasoned discussions are based on actual clinical observation of the patient. The book is divided into six sections, with numerous subsections, each of which is followed by a list of references which are mainly to the European literature, although North American sources are not entirely neglected.

In their introduction the authors contend that none of the present definitions of epilepsy is adequate even when added to them are such descriptive adjectives as idiopathic, essential, cryptogenic, genuine, infantile or symptomatic. They assert that there is not an epileptic disease, but that there are epileptic syndromes—the epilepsies. The varied clinical manifestations derive from varied pathogenic and aetiological causes. The so-called idiopathic or essential epilepsies are simply those in which the causal brain lesion has not been diagnosed during the lifetime of the patient. The convulsive reaction of the brain should be regarded as a biological property which is common to every individual; although the most obvious sign of epilepsy, it is by no means the most characteristic manifestation. Experience shows that there is an enormous number of variants in the clinical picture, so that it may be said that no two epileptics show the same type of seizure. It is from these considerations that the authors have undertaken to demonstrate the polymorphism of clinical epilepsy, and it is with validity that they claim to have reduced to a minimum any considerations based on theories of pathogenesis.

The first section of the book describes in great detail the clinical features of the convulsive seizure. Full accounts are given of the various prodromata, auras and post-convulsive phenomena. The descriptions are always illustrated by actual clinical cases, whose histories are often supplied. The next section describes the varied disorders of consciousness that occur in epilepsy, and psychiatrists will have particular interest in the accounts of automatic behaviour and the discussions of the forensic aspects of acts committed during the post-convulsive phase. It is in the clinical traditions of French psychiatry that

a lengthy examination is made of the relation between periodic epileptic psychoses and other periodic psychoses, such as manic-depressive insanity. Although the discussion is nowadays perhaps somewhat academic and out-of-date, it is a tribute to careful clinical observation. There is a helpful account of the diagnostic features of epileptic psychoses, such as the suddenness of onset and disappearance of the psychotic features, their brevity, the concomitant presence of mental confusion, which may often be complicated by violent motor agitation, the association of automatism and the frequent occurrence of subsequent amnesia. Again, the relation of the convulsive seizure to disordered mental function is shown in several ways; the psychiatric phenomena may succeed one or more seizures or absences, delirious attacks may culminate in a seizure, seizures may occur in the midst of an emotional outburst, the epileptic syndrome may for a time manifest itself solely by intermittent psychic seizures and convulsions may for long be absent, or the epileptic syndrome may present solely periodic psychic seizures.

The only fault that can be found in the book is that modern advances in diagnosis are sketchily described, so that the third section disposes of electroencephalography in ten pages. The fourth and longest section exhaustively describes the special forms of epilepsy: sub-cortical, migrainous, psychasthenic, reflex, myoclonic and Bravais-Jacksonian (*anglice* Jacksonian) epilepsy, pyknolepsy, narcolepsy and cataplexy. Attacks of laughing and weeping, disorders of the body-image, and syndromes of morbid hunger and thirst are discussed at length in their association with epilepsy. The lucidly-argued examinations of the relations between epilepsy on the one hand and cataplexy, narcolepsy and migraine on the other hand are particularly valuable.

The fifth section deals with the clinical aspects of epilepsy at various periods of life. The relation of infantile convulsions to the epileptic syndrome is authoritatively presented. Prognostic considerations in infantile convulsions are usefully tabulated, and the section ends with an account of the variations that ageing produces in epilepsy. The penultimate section is devoted to the course of epilepsy, whether it be regressive, progressive or culminating in dementia. Under the first of these headings are described the effects of various intercurrent illnesses, such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, asthma, kidney disease, diabetes and so on. The authors point out that dementia may have two different types of pathogenesis; most commonly dementia and epilepsy are two clinical manifestations of the one cerebral lesion. Secondly, dementia may be the result of cerebral changes consequent on the epileptic seizure: this is true epileptic dementia. It is pointed out that in the past, workers have failed to make this distinction, and so have expressed surprise when dementia appears without much relation to the occurrence of seizures.

The last section is concerned with the treatment of epilepsy, and maintains the erudition and completeness which characterize the whole volume. The authors' own treatment is orthodox and familiar, although for those patients who do not respond to the usual anticonvulsants it is suggested that pneumoencephalography should be performed, and that the injections of air, either by lumbar or intraventricular puncture, should be repeated frequently according to the results produced. It is claimed that the method is without danger; the seizures often lessen in frequency or may disappear for several weeks or months, and the best results are found in those patients who previously had raised cerebrospinal fluid pressure. Such a recent anticonvulsant as Tridione is mentioned only briefly, and the discussions of modern surgical treatments are not up to date. English physicians have latterly adopted a rather less restrictive régime for their patients than is recommended by the authors, but the psychotherapeutic and social aspects of treatment have not been neglected.

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