

## Reviews

*International Review of Neurobiology*. Edited by CARL C. PFEIFFER and JOHN R. SMYTHIES, vol. 5. (Pp. xi + 439; 100s.) New York and London: Academic Press. 1963.

The topics selected in this series of books include subjects about which many working in the neurological arena have little or no knowledge. This volume lives up to the reputation of its predecessors and contains much to whet the interest. All the articles have merit and it is hardly fair to select some for comment but three seem to contain material deserving a special mention. The studies of Adult Mammalian Brain Cells in Culture reveal a field full of possibility for the adventurous. The section concerned with the visual pathways touches upon the centrifugal fibres in the optic nerve and their possible functions. This is not peculiar to the optic nerve or other sensory receptors and has provoked the idea that receptor sensitivity may be adjustable. The retina, however, by virtue of the ease with which it may be studied *in vivo*, might yield information about the behaviour of sensory receptors which would clarify the confusion at present surrounding some in particular. Finally, the last chapter contains interesting facts about the effect of electro-convulsive therapy. Confused though it is, there does seem to be a strange parallel between the biochemical changes produced by this treatment and the actions and effects of the psychotherapeutic drugs. This might be a useful technique for gaining more neurochemical knowledge and thereby drug therapy for mental illness could be improved. Apart from such alarming terms as 'posttetanic potentiation' which are hardly the fault of the book, this is a worthwhile publication.

W. HEWITT

*Anatomical Lectures of William Harvey*. 'Prelectiones Anatomie Universalis.' 'De Museulis.' Edited by GWENETH WHITTERIDGE, M.A., D.Phil., F.S.A. (Pp. v + 504; illustrations; 147s.) Edinburgh and London: E. and S. Livingstone. 1964.

Mrs Whitteridge has achieved a splendid result from the task of elucidating and translating from the Latin these well used, much abbreviated and ill-penned anatomical lecture notes. That the undertaking was formidable is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact for so long no one had been able to complete it.

William Harvey was appointed Lumleian Lecturer in August 1615. These lectures on surgery had been established in perpetuity in the Royal College of Physicians by Lord Lumley on 3 July 1582, with the design of improving the standard of that craft. The course was planned to cover a period of six years and the lecturer was required to hold a public anatomy each year, lasting five consecutive days 'if the body may last so long'. The dates given on Harvey's title-page are 16, 17 and 18 April 1616. The subjects of the anatomies were criminals hanged in London or within a radius of 16 miles. Mrs Whitteridge has consulted the Sessions Records for Newgate Prison for that year and found that at 7 a.m. on 12 April two men were condemned to be hanged; so one or both of these cadavers could have been used by Harvey for his first series of demonstrations. The notes, however, seem to cover a period of about ten years for they include references to post-mortem findings in his father, Thomas Harvey, who died in 1623, and in Lord Chichester, two years later, as well as to books published several years after 1616. It is impossible, therefore, to determine in what year he first announced publicly his theory of the circulation of the blood, but that he did first make the pronouncement in these lectures seems proved by his own statement in the introduction to the 'Exercitationes Anatomicae de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis Circulatione' published in 1628.