

BRAIN STEM SECTIONS

LEVEL: MEDULLA—MOTOR DECUSSATION

This section resembles a spinal cord section, but it is actually at the transition between the cervical spinal cord and the medulla. The most conspicuous feature is the crossing of the medullary pyramid from its anterior position in the medulla to a lateral position in the cord. A portion of the anterior corticospinal tract remains uncrossed and retains this position throughout the cord with the fibers slowly crossing. The fasciculus gracilis and the fasciculus cuneatus (fine touch, pressure, vibration, two-point discrim-

ination from the body) retain their same positions in the cord but now the nuclear masses of the secondary neurons in this system are appearing (nucleus gracilis and nucleus cuneatus). The descending nucleus and tract of cranial nerve V are also conspicuous lateral to the cuneate eminence. The dorsal and ventral spinocerebellar tracts will keep this same location through the lower medullary levels. The following tracts will retain the same position in the medulla and pons: (1) the medial longitudinal fasciculus at the midline in the tegmentum near the ventricular lumen, (2) the anterior spinothalamic tract (crude touch and pressure) and the lateral spinothalamic tract (pain and temperature) near the lateral margin of tegmentum, (3) the rubrospinal and rubrobulbar tracts near the lateral most extent of the tegmentum, (4) the tectospinal tract underneath the medial longitudinal fasciculus, and (5) the reticulothalamic tract in the reticular formation.

*The second figure number refers back to a more detailed analysis of the brain stem section in Chapter 11.

