Virus and Bacterial Diseases, with special Consideration of their Public Health Significance. Symposium held at Harvard School of Public Health June 12 to 17, 1939. pp. 907. $6.50. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1940.

This is the age of viruses. Perhaps, until recent years, biologists and bacteriologists have been preoccupied with the more tangible pathogens and have had little time or occasion to delve into the mysteries of ultramicroscopic life. Viruses have been known to exist for many years, but the only two virus diseases which have received much attention from the medical profession, prior to the influenza epidemic of 1918, have been small-pox and rabies. That great pandemic convinced most people that the Peiffer bacillus was not the causative agent of the disease, and made more than one observer suspect the cause to be a filterable virus, which now, in fact, it appears to be. Research during this period undoubtedly stimulated inquiry into the nature of that realm of life, if it is true life, beyond the scope of the microscope. As a result a vast literature has accumulated on the subject, a literature which is probably quite unfamiliar to most medical men.

In June, 1939, a symposium on virus and rickettsial diseases was held in Boston under the auspices of the Harvard School of Public Health. Thirty-five contributions were given on such diseases as ampicillin, influenza, the common cold, yellow fever, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps and many others. The list of known viruses is now quite large. The volume under review is a compilation of these contributions.

The medical man would do well to familiarize himself to a degree with this new field of research. Curious observations have been made which appear to have an important bearing on the nature of life itself. These tiny filterable agents seem to constitute a link between inanimate and animate matter. They are incapable of living by themselves; they are obligatory parasites. This makes it impossible to grow them in pure culture; always must they be grown in association with some living cell. Their size, which can be inferred with some accuracy by their filter-passing capacity, is excessively small in some cases, probably no larger than some complex molecules. One of the at least, the virus of tobacco mosaic, has been secured in crystalline form.

The practitioner will find much that is new and interesting in this volume. The laboratory worker will see an excellent perspective of the field, and will find the bibliography attached to the author's list a rapid introduction to the literature. The volume itself has not been indexed.


This book is easy to read and covers the entire field. A historical summary leads to the tried and proved methods of the present. The first part of the book is devoted to this and to the recognition of peripheral vascular disease both as a pathological entity and in association with other diseases and concomitant with or complicating injuries. The later chapters are given over to distinct diseases in which the functional has its role even if this is less than the organic portion which has been stressed so much in the past. The influence of acute and chronic emotional strain, of tobacco, and of improper and incomplete hygienic measures in the excitation and exacerbation of arteriolar dysfunction place this treatise as a medical work. The discussion of remedial measures shows the author has had very considerable experience. On the whole the book is worth the study of the interested medical man and for the undergraduate it is textbook position. One is left with the impression that herein is a group of facts compiled by one who has studied their origin and proved their value.


This book is a compendium of information pertaining to the recognition, pathology, physiology and treatment of peripheral vascular diseases. The means of treatment are discussed under the headings of general considerations, general care, and hygiene, medical methods, physical and surgical methods. One especially valuable feature is the evaluation of each method in the various degrees of each disease entity, and this should prove particularly useful to those practitioners unable to spend the time observing the progress of large numbers of cases. This is essentially true in reference to drugs with reputed vasodilatory actions, including insulin-free pancreatic extract and muscle extracts with and without sodium iodide-thiosulphate. Among the physical methods the authors do not mention short-wave therapy, but comment favourably on exposure of the lumbar region to x-rays: other methods are given their due places. They are in favour of intermittent venous occlusion as an efficient method in peripheral vascular sclerosis.


Dr. Pack has produced an excellent reference book for those called upon to deal with tumours in the hands or feet. His idea of presenting the subject from this regional point of view is logical and most useful, since the surgeon is confronted always by a problem involving the local part, namely, the hand or foot.

One is startled to realize that twice as many hand tumours are malignant as are benign. This shows the importance of early recognition, diagnosis, which is made possible by the fact that the tumours are peculiarly accessible. Delay in diagnosing and treating them is inexusable. Further, the importance of these tumours to the surgeon is forcibly brought to mind when we realize that these malignant growths are of rather severe type (50 per cent of patients being either dead or with persistent evidence); and that the majority of both benign and malignant tumours are radio-resistant, so that treatment depends on surgery. In fact, Dr. Michael Mason in a chapter on carcinoma points out that radiation is exactly the wrong form of treatment in the majority of cases, and, if used, may actually precipitate malignant changes. Glomus tumours, which are beautifully handled here, are being recognized in increasing numbers and the study of the physiology of the glomera may yield valuable aid in certain peripheral vascular puzzles.

The illustrations are worthy of mention—for the most part, good clear-cut photographs with the occasional well-placed line drawing, they are many and instructive and make the book clear, informative reading.


No textbook in the last decade has brought such important contributions from the pathologist and the bronchoscopic surgeon to the diagnosis and treatment of cancer of the larynx, and this book has correlated all of this important information and presents it in usable form to the practising laryngologist and clinician. Of necessity, certain sections are more or less elementary and easily understandable even to the beginner in medicine and fill the third purpose of a medical book, which Dr. Jackson states to be, 'The reader may desire and have the opportunity for lighter reading, perhaps in his study, or on a train, or in any moment of leisure, which is a group of facts compiled by one who has studied their origin and proved their value.'