

Physiopathology of the Reticulo-Endothelial System
A Symposium organized by the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences. Edited, under the direction of B. N. Halpern, by B. Benacerraf and J. F. Delafresnaye. Pp. xii+317. (Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications; 1957.) 45s. net.

IT is greatly to the credit of Dr. Bernard Halpern and his colleagues that this symposium was organized and its proceedings compiled.

Generally speaking, the reticulo-endothelial system has not made sufficient impact on the medical world and its significance and importance are more or less poorly understood. A monograph of this kind containing formal papers, as well as summaries of discussions, is of special value since it shows the manner in which research results were studied and compared by investigators from different countries. It brings to light many factors of the physiology and pathology of this system applicable to the clinical field. Three of its important functions were specially studied—its phagocytic activity, its metabolic functions and its role in defence against bacterial infection. It was shown that phagocytic activity is influenced by the size of the liver and spleen, which are the main phagocytic organs, the volume and velocity of blood flow, the functional state of the phagocytes, and the chemical constitution, size and number of the particles of injected substances. Evidence was also presented indicating that the reticulo-endothelial system is also concerned with the elimination of blood cells, with iron and fat metabolism, with the formation of antibodies, with the production of fibrosis, and with the removal of bacteria from the circulation. It appears to be the most efficient line of defence against bacteræmia.

It is surprising, however, that no direct reference has been made to the influence exerted by the steroid hormones, which have been found to be the greatest stimulants of reticulo-endothelial activity. Further, in our laboratory vitamin B₁₂ and choline were found to be mild depressants and not stimulators, as here reported.

This symposium has been a valuable contribution to research on the reticulo-endothelial system and provides the most up-to-date account of the subject available. It is hoped it will be followed by many others in this important field of investigation.

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A Bibliography for the International Geophysical Year

National Science Foundation. Pp. vi+51. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1957.) 25 cents.

THE foreword to this bibliography states that it is neither definitive nor selective, is imperfect in many respects, and consists, for the most part, of discrete articles, the majority of which are of a non-technical nature. The reviewer can only emphasize the fact, implicit in the quoted description, that this bibliography is inadequate for the needs of the scientist professionally concerned with the International Geophysical Year. A large number of the 600 or so articles listed consist of popular articles in American magazines.

Thirteen of the 37 bibliographical pages are devoted to Earth satellites, but even in this subject it was easy to think of a scientific article, one published in

Tellus in 1956, which was not included. Articles in the scientific press of the U.S.S.R. are not listed, reports of Russian work being almost entirely limited to press releases from the Soviet Embassy in Washington.

Besides the bibliography there is a general account of the administration of the International Geophysical Year, and a comprehensive list of members of the U.S. committees concerned with it.

G. A. BULL

Forest Fungi

By Margaret E. Lancaster. Pp. 96. (Wellington: Government Printer, 1955.) 9s. 6d.

THIS attractively produced book, designed as a fairly elementary manual on forest mycology for use of the field staff of the New Zealand Forest Service, is disappointing in several respects. With such a title and so few pages, one does not expect a third or so of the text to be devoted to an account of elementary botany and an outline classification of the plant kingdom.

In the preface, the statement that "It is apparent that a basic understanding of the broad essentials of growth and reproduction of all plants is a prerequisite for even a cursory study of such a specialized group as the fungi" is, broadly speaking, true, but it was unwise here to waste space in attempting the impossible. The remainder of the book deals with the classification of fungi generally and gives a summary of the individual families with special attention to those including representatives pathogenic to trees. This is a fairly good text-book outline, well illustrated, but, in spite of a full glossary, much beyond the comprehension of the type of student for whom it is apparently intended. In compiling it the author has occasionally nodded through making generalizations. A few minor errors have been corrected in an inserted errata slip. One of a kind which haunts proof-readers, *Dictyota* for *Dictyophora*, should be added—and *Eurotium* is the perfect stage of *Aspergillus*, not of *Penicillium*.

J. RAMSBOTTOM

Species Studies in the British Flora

Edited by J. E. Lousley. (Botanical Society of the British Isles Conference Report No. 4.) Pp. 188. (London: Botanical Society of the British Isles, c/o Department of Botany, British Museum (Natural History), 1955.) 20s.

THIS volume is the report of the fourth conference of the Botanical Society of the British Isles, held in London in 1954. These biennial conferences have become an important feature of the activities of the Society, providing an opportunity for the presentation and discussion of work on all aspects of the British flora. The present report contains twenty-six contributions, mostly of high scientific merit. It is unusual in including a number of valuable papers upon the problems of bryophytes and thallophytes, since the work of the Society is traditionally limited to vascular plants with a minor descent to embrace the orphan charophytes. The contributions are from botanists both amateur and professional, for the Botanical Society is one of the few remaining scientific societies in which amateurs and professionals continue to work actively and amicably together with mutual comprehension and profit. While productions as informative as this report continue to emerge, one is moved to hope the collaboration will long continue.