

Current Virus Research. Edited by C. H. ANDREWES, M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.S. *British Medical Bulletin*, vol. 15, No. 3. London: Medical Department, The British Council. 1959. Pp. xvi + 76; 8 plates; 1 figure. Price 20s.

This is a sequel to *Viruses in Medicine*, published in 1953 and is a brilliant condensation of present knowledge about human viruses into 15 chapters, each written by an acknowledged expert on the subject. The first five chapters are on general and technical subjects: virus genetics, tissue culture, interference, multiplication, serology. Ten chapters follow about groups of viruses which are related to particular diseases, such as chicken pox and zoster, measles, influenza, enteroviruses, cold and minor respiratory infections, trachoma, myxomatosis, etc. Clinician and specialist alike will welcome having so much detailed information collected in one volume.

The Effect of Pharmacologic Agents on the Nervous System : Vol. XXXVII of the Research Publications of the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease. Edited by FRANCIS J. BRACELAND, M.D. London: Ballière, Tindall and Cox, 1959. Pp. xi + 488.

This volume constitutes the Proceedings of the Association during a two day symposium held in December 1957 in New York and devoted to the above subject.

There are 26 chapters each of which contains an amplified version of the original paper together with a record of the subsequent discussion. Some papers are purely pharmacological and some clinical. All contain a wealth of data which demonstrates the rapid advances that are taking place in this field, and together they provide a comprehensive review of the subject.

Most of this is more specialized than a general practitioner needs but a chapter on "Placebos" by Professor Wolf from Oklahoma is fascinating, and a study of this might contribute greatly to reducing prescribing costs. The author has again demonstrated experimentally "the power of a meaningful situation to bring about striking bodily effects". He found it impossible to predict whether an individual was likely to show a placebo reaction, which sometimes occurred—and sometimes did not—in all the subjects tested. We need to know more about this manifestation of what Balint has called "the drug doctor", which is the most powerful pharmacological agent of all.