Book Reviews

A bibliography of infantile paralysis, 1789–1944: with selected abstracts and annotations. Morris Fishbein. (Ed.) (Compiled by Ludvig Hektoen and Ella M. Salmonsen.) Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1946. Pp. 672. $15.00.

The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis is to be congratulated for having sponsored the preparation of this monumental bibliography, which now provides the physician and research worker with a most valuable tool in their battle with this dread scourge.

Much has been written of the rate at which scientific literature accumulates and how difficult it is for the scientist to keep up with it. A glance at this list dramatically illustrates the point. A total of 8,320 references has been included. Of this total, 805 references suffice to record the literature for the first 111 years covered in this book. From 1900 to 1944, 7,515 references appear, and of this number 2,468 papers appeared in the 10-year period, 1934–1944. The curve of production is thus seen to be a very steep one. Its rate of climb was only slightly retarded during the war years, and one may confidently predict an acceleration in the publication of studies on the subject of infantile paralysis in the decade ahead. It is precisely this increase not only in the rate but also in the volume of publication which emphasizes the importance of a compilation such as we now have. It is only necessary to scan the citations listed to note that the literature on this one disease is scattered through numberless journals published in many languages. The almost hopeless task of working through this vast mass of printed material has now been markedly simplified by the cumulation into one volume of practically the entire literature on poliomyelitis. Thus, the investigator is now provided for the first time with a base line from which he may plan new researches. In addition, the aggregation and juxtaposition of titles may provide glimpses of relationships between facts hitherto unobserved because of the diffuseness of the literature.

The references in this bibliography are arranged chronologically, and abstracts of the more important works have been provided. Almost all titles in foreign languages have been translated into English, and author and subject indexes have been included.

In a work as well arranged and printed as this one it is a pity that the editor and compilers did not see fit to give inclusive pagination in their citations. It is often very useful for an investigator to know whether the reference he seeks is a 2-page note or a 50-page monograph. It is to be hoped that in the supplements which are promised this defect will be corrected. These supplements, incidentally, will include the literature from abroad which, because of the war, was unavailable to the compilers.

In conclusion, the reviewer hopes that this work not only will be instrumental in making possible further progress toward the conquest of infantile paralysis but will stimulate the production of similar guides to the literature of other diseases, such as cancer.

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Inside the vacuum tube. John F. Rider. New York: John F. Rider, Inc., 1945. Pp. xvi + 407. (Illustrated.) $4.50.

The author of this text is well known as a writer and publisher of a number of books on elementary radio theory widely read and used by radio servicemen and technicians. He states that this book is an effort to present the elements of the theory and operation of basic types of vacuum tubes. In order to simplify the presentation, only the minimum of mathematics has been included.

In spite of the simplified presentation, the text is quite thorough in its treatment of the vacuum tube, no significant features of vacuum-tube operation being neglected without such omissions being clearly indicated. The explanations throughout the text are quite accurate from a technical standpoint. It is found, however, that the problem of presenting technical material without recourse to mathematics and the necessity for very detailed explanations of all curves and graphs frequently lead to quite complicated sentences and rather heavy reading. Probably this is unavoidable, but it means that the text must be studied slowly and with great care in order to understand it completely.

Throughout the text the author uses the electron convention of current flow, showing the current flowing from the cathode to the positive plate. This is very convenient in explaining vacuum-tube phenomena and might be more widely used by others. On circuit diagrams, current flow is illustrated by means of electron figures, with feet and arms, running around the circuit. Because these images are rather large, they tend to obscure the circuits, and arrows might have served as well. Curves and figures are frequently presented on both sides of a single page to help the reader who would otherwise be forced to turn the page to refer to them—another innovation which should have wider use.

The author devotes considerable space to a discussion of the electrostatic field within the vacuum tube. This is unusual, but helpful, in an elementary text of this sort. Three stereoscopic illustrations are included, but the reviewer feels that they do not contribute greatly to a better understanding of the text.

Because of the author's refusal to yield to the temptation of making inaccurate statements for the sake of simplicity, this book may confidently be read by a beginner or one new in the field with the assurance that the material presented is an accurate explanation of vacuum-tube phenomena.

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