
BOOK REVIEWS, CASE REPORTS and ABSTRACTS

G. V. PARSONS—*Editor*

DUNANT: The Story of the Red Cross

By Martin Gumpert, translated by Wittaker Chambers, published by Oxford University Press. New York.

TO one who has been educated to the nationalistic idea that Clara Barton was the founder of the Red Cross this book is indeed a revelation. It is strange that the name of the founder of a force which rose through the nineteenth century as definitely as did Nationalism, Militarism and Marxism should be known to so few of us. He was Henri Dunant.

Dunant, a wealthy Swiss banker, happened by strange coincidence to be at the battle of Solferino in 1859. What he saw there was a nightmare which changed the course of his life. There was no surgical aid. Having done what he could at the time, Dunant was moved by the greater desire to "humanize" war. He spent the next five years and a good part of his fortune towards getting support of his idea and in 1864 succeeding in bringing about the first convention of the Red Cross.

For a time he dined with and was toasted by Kings, Emperors and Generals. With the disappearance of his money, however, his friends became few and he lived in poverty for a time in Paris whence he dropped from sight and was thought dead.

Years later he was found living at a poorhouse in the Swiss village of Herden by Bertha von Sutter, one time secretary to Alfred Nobel. Largely through her efforts he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901. With characteristic charity Dunant gave the money to worthy causes and died at his retreat in 1910.

This book portrays the life of a man who perhaps lacked selfish practicability but who was a great visionary and lover of humanity. But the book does more than that, for it describes the rise of a movement which was the first truly international organization and presents the panorama of the whole nineteenth century. In the words of Thomas Mann: It is a book apart, and in the finest sense unctemporary, which will first receive its true deserts, first achieve its true rank, at the moment, when, in its own words, "the old doctrines of salvation and freedom of the western world can be proclaimed as a new and redeeming truth to the masses that now despise, and to youth that has never heard them."

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INSULIN

Its Chemistry and Physiology

HANS F. JENSEN, Ph.D.

The Commonwealth Fund, New York, 1938. 252 Pages, Price \$2.00

THIS monograph is an epitome of the important literature on these subjects up to January 1, 1938. It is also the result of several years of research in the laboratory of the late Dr. John J. Abel, of the Johns Hopkins University.

The book begins with a brief but revealing history of the work which led to the discovery that the Islands of Langerhans produced the hormone. Then follow complete descriptions of the various methods of preparation and purification of insulin.

The chapters dealing with the chemistry of crystalline insulin show that the hypoglycaemic action may depend upon dithio groupings, free amino groups, and phenolic groups. Hence the action does not depend on the whole molecule, but on the arrangement of certain of its amino acids. Other compounds of similar structure exhibit like specific properties. No satisfactory insulin substitute has been produced to date, yet a number of compounds reduce blood sugar levels appreciably, though acting in a different physiological manner. Synthalin and neosynthalin, used for a short time in the treatment of diabetes, have been found to produce severe toxic effects.

The remainder of the monograph deals with the physiological action of insulin, and covers this difficult problem very thoroughly. The fact that insulin may not be the only hormone produced by the pancreas is pointed out by references to the work of Dragstedt and his associates, and to that of Chaikoff and Kaplan. This section of the work is of value to the student, as points of clinical importance are brought to light, e.g. the effect of hyperthermia on carbohydrate metabolism, the causes of hypoglycaemic nervous symptoms, and the effect of insulin on the glycogen content of the livers of normal animals.

The bibliography is very complete, and valuable as a guide to detailed work on any topic on the subject.

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