

The Chemical Structure of Proteins, par G. E. W. WOLSTENHOLME, Churchill Ltd., London 1953, pp. 222, 49 illustrations, 25 shillings.

Ce petit volume rassemble les communications présentées au cours d'un symposium tenu à Londres en Décembre 1952. Les quatre premières communications, dues respectivement à L. C. CRAIG, W. H. STEIN, R. R. PORTER et R. L. M. SYNGE, traitent de la purification des protéines et des peptides naturels, étape préliminaire indispensable à toute étude de structure. La détermination des groupes C- et N-terminaux et les méthodes de dégradation contrôlées à partir d'une extrémité de la molécule protéique font l'objet des communications de P. DESNUELLE, de A. C. CHIBNALL, de C. FROMAGEOT et M. JUTISZ, de P. EDMAN, de H. FRAENKEL-CONRAT et de F. TURBA. L'utilisation des enzymes protéolytiques est traitée dans deux communications dues à E. L. SMITH et à P. BOULANGER et G. BISERTE. Signalons enfin les communications dues à D. F. ELLIOTT (Acyl migration in the study of protein structure), K. FELIX (Protamines et Nucléoprotamines), W. H. SCHROEDER (Some experiments on the chromatographic separation and identification of peptides in partial hydrolysates of gelatin) et W. GRASSMANN (Electron optical and chemical studies on the structure of collagens).

Le mérite de cet ouvrage est d'aborder les principaux problèmes que pose l'établissement de la structure chimique des protéines, et cela sous une forme extrêmement suggestive et vivante, grâce en particulier à l'ampleur des discussions qui ont suivi chaque communication et qui sont ici rapportées in extenso. Il intéressera donc tous les biochimistes qui travaillent dans le domaine des protéines.

R. MONIER (Paris)

The Physics of Viruses. E. C. POLLARD, Academic Press, New York, 1953, 230 pp. with graphs, diagrams and photographs. \$ 5.50.

This is a pretentious little book and many people will be so completely deterred by the obvious nonsense that is apparent in it at a glance that they will not look for the sense that is there too. A review may, charitably, start with the sense.

The physical processes used in the separation and characterisation of viruses are described briefly and critically so that the nature of the actual observation made is clearly brought out. The validity of the conclusions is discussed in a way that is designed to make the reader sceptical about detailed interpretations. This is admirable but it is marred in places by a conversational and ambiguous style of writing. Many examples would be tedious; the statement that "A human being functions considerably by reason of his surface, and so a virus must do so much more" may serve as an illustration.

The nonsense covers an extensive field. The Foreword starts well with errors of years and even centuries in dating and from this we go on to various attempts to produce a micro-anatomy of several viruses. For some of the statements made in these sections there is a little evidence; for most of them there is none. The author, it is true, repeatedly apologises for these attempts but persists in making them; once for the curious reason that viruses presumably have an internal structure "so why not say so". Under the circumstances apparently one structure is as good as another.

A quotation from Walt Whitman introduces the book; another from the same poem would have been more apt:-

"Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the current and index."

Yet another would have been useful in forestalling criticism: -

"Down-hearted doubters, dull and excluded,
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, dishearten'd, atheistical,
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt, despair, and unbelief."

Dr. POLLARD is not much troubled by doubt and unbelief.

N. W. PIRIE (Harpenden)