Instructional Course Lectures of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. Edited by Fred C. REYNOLDS, M.D., St Louis, Missouri. Volume XVI. 11×9 in. Pp. 335, with 260 figures and 36 tables. Index. 1959. St Louis: The C. V. Mosby Company. London: Henry Kimpton. Price £6.

This the sixteenth volume in the series is a selection from the 124 Instructional Courses presented at the 1959 Meeting of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. These courses were presumably originally designed for the purpose of keeping busy orthopaedic surgeons abreast of developments in the speciality, but perhaps there is now a tendency to regard them as a substitute for basic reading, at least this is the impression that one gets from this volume.

Some of the articles are pedestrian and would hardly whet the appetite of a jaded surgeon in the early hours of the morning, and one wonders why they were selected in preference to others potentially more interesting that have been excluded. The lecture on the anatomy of the hand adds nothing to the standard texts, and Figure 34, illustrating the sensory nerve supply, is incorrect. The variable distribution of the median and ulnar nerves to the intrinsic muscles of the hand—which is of considerable practical importance—is not mentioned.

There are, however, several excellent articles, especially those by Riordan, on the surgery of the paralytic hand, Grice on the role of subtalar fusion in the treatment of valgus deformities of the foot, and Schmidt on the fundamental principles and treatment of scoliosis. The latter is a delightful and concise presentation of a difficult subject which should be compulsory reading for registrars. These articles alone will make this volume a welcome addition to any library, but even in these days of inflation the price seems a little high.—Roland BARNES.

Biological Problems of Grafting. A Symposium sponsored by the Commission Administrative du Patrimoine Universitaire de Liège, and the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences. Established under the joint auspices of Unesco and W.H.O. (18th–21st of March 1959.) Edited by F. ALBERT and P. B. MEDAWAR, with thirty-six other contributors. 10×7 in. Pp. xii+453, with 44 figures and 82 tables. 1959. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications Ltd. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher. Toronto: The Ryerson Press. Price 50s.

Knowledge of the nature of the reaction between hosts and grafts from individuals of the same species and from other species is accumulating so rapidly that no text-book gives an adequate account of this field. This symposium, while excellent in itself, unfortunately does not fill this gap. Each paper presents an intensive study of some small facet of the whole problem; and, while each is valuable, there is some overlapping and a lack of continuity. A reader not familiar with the subject will find the symposium difficult to follow. Many of the papers are concerned with identification and characterisation of the two types of antibody—humoral and cellbound—that are recognised to develop in response to a homograft: but the relative importance of these, and the mechanisms by which they bring about the rejection of the graft, remain obscure.

Clinicians will perhaps be most interested in those papers that describe methods by which the homograft rejection may be prevented or delayed. The two main techniques at present available—the induction of “tolerance” by exposing an animal to a homograft at or soon after birth, and total body irradiation—while of great interest experimentally, are still unsuited to widespread clinical use. Several papers report that when acceptance of the graft is obtained by one of these means, the host may later sicken and die, because of an immunological reaction of the graft against the host, an observation which will further complicate the therapeutic usefulness of homografts.

Bone grafts receive little attention. One paper by Joubert recommends the clinical use of a calf bone bank on the basis of somewhat slender experimental and clinical evidence and despite the fact that the use of bone heterografts has been found unsatisfactory in other centres, notably in the well documented experience of the Dutch Red Cross Bone Bank. Danis records his experience with grafts of bone marrow, periosteum and fracture callus. Autografts of each of these materials produced a small ossicle containing marrow, whereas homografts failed to do so. From this he concludes that metaplastic induction of bone does not occur and that bone forming around a graft is a product of graft cells—a conclusion with which many would disagree, at least if meant for more general application as he implies.

To those engaged in research in the field of transplantation immunity this book will prove most valuable, as well as indicating many avenues to which their researches could usefully be directed. For the clinician it emphasises how far we have yet to go before living homografts become a reality.—John CHALMERS.