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INTRODUCTION

SURGERY OF THE HAND

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I AM glad to have an opportunity of introducing the Symposium on Hand Surgery which follows. Appropriately, it comprises the work of ten individuals and the papers fit together very well in presenting problems of general concern. Particularly is this so for those who have responsibility for the conduct of busy outpatient accident units; industrial medical services; and in fact, anyone brought into daily contact with patients having manual disorders.

This is not only accident surgery, orthopaedic surgery or plastic surgery: it is just *surgery* as seen by men working in one or other of these fields but all united in having a special interest in the surgery of the hand.

A simple puncture wound in the palm of the hand can result in a complex disorder and may require treatment of surgical excellence. A vital part is played by precise examination leading to correct diagnosis at the earliest possible moment. Industrial medical officers have here a great

responsibility. General practitioners could do better if their work were more closely integrated with hospital outpatient departments or with first-aid units.

Badly mauled hands can tax the skill and ingenuity of the most erudite surgeon. As one of the writers here implies, it is sometimes only in the quiet of the operating theatre, when the patient is anaesthetized, that the surgeon can allow himself the calm of reflection which leads to decisive action. It may involve the planning of a campaign having its special strategy and tactics.

In each of the subjects dealt with, the author was asked to give a brisk, informal and informative presentation for the intelligent and skilful practitioner. In the result, the reader will find much of great value, including four fundamental articles of non-traumatic interest: on congenital abnormalities, rheumatoid deformities, Dupuytren's contracture and tumours of the hand.