

## PREFACE

### THE Rh FACTOR

THE discovery of the presence of the Rh agglutinin in the red blood cell must rank as one of the important events of a medical era already surfeited with important and exciting discoveries. It is good that Karl Landsteiner, the discoverer of the original blood groups, should have been the co-discoverer of the "new" blood factor. Here was a man so single-minded in his devotion to the immunological aspects of the blood that for a period of at least 40 years he worked almost continuously at his quest for the elucidation of red cell factors. It is fitting that his efforts should have been crowned with such success and that two of his former pupils, Philip Levine and Alexander S. Wiener, should have become pioneers and outstanding leaders in this field of investigation.

The great interest in this subject was well brought out in the Dallas-Mexico City Congress of November 1946. Here were brought together many of the recognized leaders in this and related fields, and the discussions which took place and which are reported in this special issue of "BLOOD" were highly stimulating. This was particularly true with regard to such controversial matters as that relating to nomenclature; the Fisher-Race theory of three gene loci vs. the Wiener theory of multiple alleles; "blocking antibodies" vs. "cryptagglutinoids" and other matters of present day importance. It cannot be said of the various individuals working in this field that they lack enthusiasm or desire to spread their various theses across the world's literature. Although some of their discussions have on occasion seemed to descend to acrimonious levels one cannot deny that they have often stimulated the interested investigators to renewed endeavors which have at times led to valuable discoveries.

What is occasionally lacking in immuno-hematologic discussions is an indication of their relationship to hematologic events in general and to the pathogenetic aspects of hemolytic disease in particular. Erythroblastosis fetalis is no more nor less than an acute hemolytic disease (of the newborn) which can be well understood in almost all its ramifications once one is acquainted with the general hemolytic mechanisms as induced by immune antibodies and other materials. The results obtained in the experimental production of various types of hemolytic anemia<sup>1</sup> using immune antibodies fitted in perfectly with the concept of isoimmunization with the Rh factor as later advanced by Levine and his co-workers.<sup>2</sup> In a recent article by the French worker Bessis,<sup>3</sup> the close relationship of the experimental hemolytic anemias produced by anti-sera to the clinical syndrome of erythroblastosis fetalis is well brought out: clinical, hematologic, and histopathologic features being described in detail.

The meetings on the Rh factor led to a sympathetic understanding of the different problems of investigators in their respective environments and thus to a definite feeling that international meetings were something to be carefully fostered. The Dallas-Mexico City meetings were originally conceived as little get-togethers

to discuss the Rh factor. Like many events which happen in Texas, it expanded—almost spontaneously, it would seem—into a relatively large “Congress” and out of it has come the International Society of Hematology. This group bids fair to be a potent force in the constantly expanding field of disorders of the blood and blood-forming organs.

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#### REFERENCES

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