

PATHOLOGY.

UNDER THE CHARGE OF DRs. ADAMI, KLOTZ, DUVAL, AND NICHOLLS.

Report of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, 1908.—E. F. BASHFORD,
Supt. of Research Laboratories.

This is the third report which has been issued by the British Cancer Commission. As the second report appeared in 1905, a great deal of material has accumulated to make up the third report.

The ethnological data concerning the distribution of cancer, the zoological distribution of cancer, the study of spontaneous mouse cancer, and the minuter histological structure of cancers and sarcomas, are all discussed at length in separate papers by the investigators who have devoted years of study to the subject. There are seventeen papers in all.

In the introduction Bashford says that "much of the pessimism with which the future of the investigation of cancer is still regarded, is due to the persistence of the widely disseminated but ill defined idea that malignant new growths, as a whole, are of congenital origin." The study of the incidence of cancer as determined by irritants in man, demonstrates absolutely that the generalization of the idea of a congenital or embryonic origin is incorrect, and this conclusion agrees with the results of experiments, and notably with the experimental production of sarcoma.

Ethnological distribution of Cancer. Bashford.—The author finds that very little reliance can be placed on the vital statistics of various countries. This discredit which must be placed upon the figures of the incidence of cancer, is dependent upon the improper methods of death registration. In France, Denmark, Sweden and Bulgaria, the causes of death are not tabulated except for the towns. The number of deaths assigned to cancer increases in one country or another, in a manner parallel with the increasing accuracy of the vital statistics, and the low death rates in Servia, Hungary and Spain are probably the result of understatement. Switzerland shows the largest number of deaths due to cancer, which may be the result of the customary medical diagnosis of the dead bodies. The death rate from cancer in England is 0.79 per 1,000 population. These figures, Bashford believes, are nearer the truth than in most countries. Some Governments permit lay-men or lay-women to register the diagnosis of death, which is apt to lead to cases such as cited by Prinzig. In one an ignorant peasant was authorized to certify the causes of death, all of which he reported due to cardiac failure; while another returned fifty deaths from diphtheria in Filest, at a time when that disease was quite rare.