

BOOK REVIEWS

RECENT ADVANCES IN CHEMOTHERAPY. Third Edition. Volumes I and II. By G. M. Findlay, C.B.E., Sc.D., M.D., F.R.C.P. Pp. ix + 625. J. and A. Churchill, Ltd., London, 1950. 36s.

The rapid progress in the development of chemotherapeutic substances has compelled the author of this well-known book to give an account of his subject, not, as hitherto, in one volume but in four. There is much to commend this decision for one of the features of the subject is that it lends itself to subdivision, thus permitting fuller discussion of individual topics. Another advantage is perhaps mechanical, for a series of four portable volumes is much more acceptable to the reader than one comprehensive but unmanageable book. The author has elected to discuss the chemotherapy of scabies, helminthic and protozoal diseases in Volumes I and II; the latter is devoted entirely to an account of the chemotherapy of malaria. In the third volume it is proposed to deal with the chemotherapy of bacterial, rickettsial and virus infections, whilst a discussion of the general principles of chemotherapy, antibiotics and sulphonamides is reserved for the fourth volume.

The publication of the first two volumes of this work is an accomplishment of merit, for the author not only provides accurate and well-documented evidence, but also presents it in a consistently attractive manner. A fascinating feature of these volumes is the historical account of the types of drugs used in the treatment of disease. This affords an opportunity of discussing the general approach to problems of infestation by parasites, and the methods which have been devised to test the efficacy of the old and newer drugs. There is, for example, a critical account of the techniques which have been evolved for the assessment of anthelmintics and of the progress which has been made in analysing their mode of action. The chapter on chemotherapy of leishmaniasis provides a discussion of antimonial compounds and of the aromatic diamidines, whilst the problem of drug resistance is very fully reviewed in the section on the chemotherapy of trypanosomiasis.

The subject matter of Volume II consists of a lucid survey of many aspects of the chemotherapy of malaria. Intensive research has shown that a variety of compounds of very different chemical structure have anti-plasmodial activity. A detailed account is given of the complex chemistry of the cinchona alkaloids, proguanil and its precursors, and of the methods used to assess the chemotherapeutic activity of the antimalarial drugs. The pharmacology and mode of action of these drugs are fully discussed and the volume also deals with the control and treatment of malaria in man. In addition to a separate index for authors and for subject matter, there is at the end of each subsection of the volumes, a comprehensive and up-to-date list of references.

To the medical practitioner, the public health officer and the veterinary surgeon, these two volumes provide accurate and up-to-date information about the prophylaxis and treatment of parasitic diseases in man and domestic animals. These are also "thinking books", and research workers, whatever their field of interest, will profit much from reading this fascinating account of the development of scientific method as it is reflected in the recent and rapid advances in chemotherapy.

ANDREW WILSON.

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UNSERE HEILPFLANZEN by Professor Dr. Hans Flück. Pp. xvi + 160, with plates. Ott-Verlag, Thun., 2nd Edition, 1950.

The wide range of geographical formations to be encountered in Switzerland has resulted in a very diverse native flora, of which some 450 different species are used as remedies. From these plants 175 species have been chosen by Professor H. Flück for inclusion in "Our Medicinal Plants," the basis of selection being the verification of efficacy of each by long experience or by detailed chemical or pharmacological investigations. This volume differs from many other publications on Swiss medicinal plants in that it has included a number of plants of well tried efficacy used only by the inhabitants of the more mountainous regions; examples of such are *Artemisia laxa* found almost exclusively above the tree line at altitudes of 2,200 to 3,200 m. although it is rare in most cantons, and the widespread, exclusively alpine, *Achillea moschata* occurring at altitudes of 1,500 to 3,000 m.

The book is meant for the general public and gives a simple description of each plant, 144 different species are illustrated by coloured plates so that the wild plants may be easily identified and collected. The habitat of each plant, the part used, and simple details for its collection, drying and preparation for domestic medicinal use are given, while notes on methods of garden cultivation of several suitable species are provided. In each monograph the chemical nature, where known, of the active principles present is given and also an indication of the plant's actions and uses. A list of maladies, with indications of the plants to be used for their treatment, concludes the volume. The standard of the work is high and the coloured plates are excellent. The plants described include three gymnospermic species, seven lower plants, seven monocotyledons and the remainder are dicotyledons; they include such well-known members of the alpine flora as *Veratrum album*, *Colchicum autumnale*, *Aconitum napellus*, *Thymus serpyllum*, *Gentiana lutea*, *Carlina acaulis* and *Arnica montana*. The first edition of this book was published in 1942 but was not available in this country; the second edition, now published, differs only in minor details and it will be of value to all who are interested in medicinal plants.

J. M. ROWSON.