BOOK REVIEW

PORPHYRINS, by A. Vannotti. Pp. xv + 254 (including Index, Bibliography and 15 plates). Hilger & Watts, Ltd., London, 1954. 50*s.*

This book is essentially a personal expression of the author's concepts of porphyrin metabolism, and in view of Professor Vannotti's notable contributions to this field of study it is very welcome to have his complete exposition of the subject in the English language. Professor Rimington's translation maintains a style pleasantly suited to the work. Delays in publication seem to have been rather considerable, as the author's and translator's prefaces are dated during December 1952, and there are very few references to work published later than 1950. Consequently, some of the recent developments in the paper chromatography of the porphyrins and in knowledge of porphyrin precursors such as porphobilinogen are referred to insufficiently for a monograph of this kind. But otherwise this is a simple survey of the clinical significance of the porphyrins and a useful introduction to the complex problems of deranged porphyrin metabolism. M. WEATHERALL.

(ABSTRACTS *continued from page* 151.)

30 minutes and an effective concentration remained in the blood stream for over 6 hours. When 0·5 g. was administered in a litre of dextrose solution over 6 hours, blood levels were comparable to those obtained with multiple doses of 0·5 g. by mouth. With both oral and intravenous administration the blood levels obtained were comparable to those observed with similar doses of oxytetracycline and chlortetracycline. The clinical responses and the types and frequency of untoward reactions in the series of patients treated were also comparable in all respects with those obtained with oxytetracycline and chlortetracycline. S. L. W.

Wasp Venom, The Potent Slow Contracting Substance (Kinin) in. M. Schachter and E. M. Thain. (*Brit. J. Pharmacol.*, 1954, **9**, 352.) Chemical and pharmacological characterisation of the slow contracting substance present in wasp venom (termed "kinin" by the authors), previously described by Jaques and Schachter (*Brit. J. Pharmacol.*, 1954, **9**, 53), show it to be a slowly dialysable polypeptide, which is readily destroyed by trypsin or chymotrypsin. It is very stable at neutral or slightly acid *p*H, less stable at low *p*H and very unstable at high *p*H. The stability of kinin in the crude state is increased by boiling for a few minutes. The substance is soluble in water, in 95 per cent. phenol, in 5 per cent. trichloracetic acid and in 60 per cent. ammonium sulphate; it is insoluble in 95 per cent. ethanol, in 95 per cent. acetone and in anhydrous ether. Purification by paper chromatography suggests kinin either to be a single substance or a mixture of closely related substances. In addition to its action on the guinea-pig ileum rendered insensitive to histamine, acetylcholine and 5-hydroxytryptamine, kinin also contracted the isolated rabbit jejunum or ileum after atropinisation. Kinin also causes a marked lowering of the blood pressure of the atropinised rabbit and to a lesser degree that of the cat treated with atropine and mepyramine. Comparison pharmacologically of the crude venom with the purified kinin gave the same ratio of activity on all the animal preparations used. On a molar basis the purified substance would appear to be more potent than histamine, on the guinea-pig ileum. Bee venom contains little or no kinin or 5-hydroxytryptamine, but does contain another slow contracting substance active on the mepyramine-treated guinea-pig ileum. Desensitisation of the ileum to this compound is rapid. It may be the substance concerned in the release of histamine and other substances by bee venom. G. P.