

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TP and 5-HTP were not detected, as these two amino acids are generally recognised as intermediates in the formation of 5-HT in animals. Further work on the relationship of indole derivatives to the tomato plant is in progress.

G. B. WEST.

Department of Pharmacology,
School of Pharmacy,
29-39 Brunswick Square,
London, W.C.1.
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REFERENCE

1. West, *J. Pharm. Pharmacol.*, 1958, **10**, 589.

BOOK REVIEW

THE CHEMISTRY OF DRUGS. By Norman Evers and Dennis Caldwell. Pp. 415 (including Index). Ernest Benn Limited, London, 1959, 84s.

Readers who are familiar with earlier editions of *The Chemistry of Drugs* will find that, although in its new form it has been completely rewritten and greatly extended, it still conforms to the same general plan. There is undoubtedly a great deal to be said for the classification of synthetic drugs on a pharmacological basis, though difficulties arise where there is a multiplicity of useful actions in the one substance. It seems a pity, therefore, that the authors have felt it necessary to retain the division between the synthetic drugs in Part I and naturally occurring drugs in Part II. It is the opinion of the reviewer that the inclusion of the alkaloids from Part II within the ambit of the pharmacological classification of Part I would have given a uniformity which the book lacks in its present form, since classification on use is already adopted for the other naturally occurring substances such as vitamins, hormones and antibiotics. This apart, however, the new edition is to be welcomed as providing a most useful, extensive, and up to date survey of the chemistry of synthetic drugs and natural products of medicinal importance. It is natural that the treatment of synthetic drugs should emphasise synthetic methods, and in this the authors excel, but it is disappointing to note a general failure to place the same degree of emphasis on chemical properties of pharmaceutical importance. Much useful information of this character is in fact included, but so much more that is of value could have been added, perhaps at the expense of sections on the cryptopine, protopine, strychnine, aconitine and certain of the steroidal alkaloids. The chapter on antibiotics could also have been usefully extended, though deficiencies such as these are counterbalanced by the enlarged and up to date bibliography which is a feature of the new edition, and in this the authors are to be congratulated. The book, too, is easy to read, the subject matter being liberally interspersed with formulae and equations. There are remarkably few errors, but attention should be drawn to those in the formulae of pethidine, diisopropylidene-sorbose, and streptomycin, and also to the persistent use of pentavalent- for quaternary-nitrogen, a practice which is deplored. Nonetheless, the book contains a wealth of information which should prove invaluable to chemists, pharmacists and students alike.

J. B. STENLAKE.