

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

first released when the mast-cell is injured, is to prepare many more connective-tissue cells than are normally available in the reticuloendothelial system to receive the heparin that will follow. Another action of the released histamine may be to cause the appearance in the lymph of an enzyme capable of producing the nonapeptide, bradykinin, from one of the plasma globulins (Edery and Lewis, 1962); this peptide has already been shown to possess a potent vasodilator property, to increase capillary permeability, to cause the accumulation of leucocytes, and to produce pain.

G. B. WEST.

Department of Pharmacology,
School of Pharmacy,
University of London,
29/39 Brunswick Square,
London, W.C.1.
August 1, 1962

REFERENCES

- Boyd, J. F. and Smith, A. N. (1959). *J. Path. Bact.*, **78**, 379-388.
Edery, H. and Lewis, G. P. (1962). *J. Physiol. Proc.*, June.
Jorpes, J. E. (1946). *Heparin in the Treatment of Thrombosis*. London.
Northover, B. J. (1958). *M. Pharm. Thesis*, Univ. of London.
Parratt, J. R. and West, G. B. (1957). *J. Physiol.*, **137**, 169-178.
Riley, J. F. (1962). *Lancet*, **2**, 40-41.
Riley, J. F., Shepherd, D. M., West, G. B. and Stroud, S. W. (1955). *Nature, Lond.*, **176**, 1123.
Riley, J. F. and West, G. B. (1953). *J. Physiol.*, **120**, 528-537.
West, G. B. (1956). *Abs. XX Int.physiol.Congr.*, Brussels, 964-965.

BOOK REVIEWS

MEDICINAL PLANTS IN NIGERIA. By Bep Oliver. Private Edition. Pp. 138. Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Ibadan, 1960.

This book is a preliminary review of the more important plant material used in native medicine in Nigeria. The object in view is "to provide a critical study of the scattered information that exists on drugs growing in Nigeria". It is hoped that this study will lead the way to the undertaking of research work to discover the active principles (if any) present in the drugs and to sort out drugs possessing useful medicinal properties from those which are inert. The introduction points out how much mumbo jumbo is associated with many native remedies.

Chapter II gives a tabulated list (Table I) of 94 plants yielding drugs which are, or have been, recognised in European medicine as therapeutic agents. The plants are arranged alphabetically according to their generic names, and particulars are arranged in six columns headed Name of Plant, Family, Part Used, Constituents, Medicinal Use, Other Uses.

For each plant in the Table an indication is given of the publication in which the plant or a product from the plant is or has been described, e.g., B.P., B.P.C., Indian Pharmacopoeia, International Pharmacopoeia, etc.

Chapter III records the "Chemical Constituents of Vegetable Drugs" and Chapter IV lists "Plants Used in Local Medicine" with particulars of their constituents, medicinal uses and a note of any other commercial or possible uses to which they might be put. 362 drugs are included in this list (Table II). Chapter V gives brief botanical descriptions of a selection (247 plants) of Nigerian Medicinal Plants, based largely on Hutchinson and Dalziel's *Flora of West Tropical Africa* and the revision (Vol. I, parts 1 and 2) made by R. W. J. Keay.

BOOK REVIEWS

The descriptions are accompanied by 24 full-page plates of drawings of 46 of the more important plants. Chapter VI gives very brief notes on collecting and drying, and Chapters VII and VIII classify the plants according to their pharmacological action or therapeutic use. The book closes with an alphabetical index of the plants included in the text and a general bibliography.

The book is based upon a series of four lectures given in April, 1959, in the Pharmacy Department of the Nigerian College; it forms a very useful preliminary attempt to sort out the very numerous native medicinal products, and should be of much value to assist future research workers in choosing material for further investigation.

T. E. WALLIS.

ORGANOPHOSPHORUS POISONS. ANTICHOLINESTERASES AND RELATED COMPOUNDS. By D. F. Heath. Pp. vi + 403 (including Indices). Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1961. 80s.

The number of research papers on organophosphates (with insecticidal and anticholinesterase properties) which have appeared since Schrader carried out his pioneer work 30 years ago is tremendous and reviews of the subject turn up at short intervals. These usually deal with selected topics and thus there is great need for a book which presents the more important aspects on a broad basis and which bridges the gap between various disciplines. This the author has set out to do. He reviews fundamental aspects of the chemistry, biochemistry and pharmacology of organophosphates. At the same time he tries to cater for the novice as well as the expert in an individual field who wishes to know something about related work. To do this in the space available it was necessary to use some drastic surgery regarding references to published work, to restrict severely the presentation of details and to acquaint the reader with a large number of basic concepts.

The presentation of the material is lucid and the sections on chemistry and biochemistry contain a large number of figures and tables summarising neatly a wealth of information which the author has extracted with great patience from a large number of individual papers. Pharmacological aspects are frequently more difficult to tackle than chemical and biochemical aspects if one aims at putting everything into nice little packages and one can't help having the feeling that in the sections on pharmacology the main theme is at times obscured by details which should either have been put into small print or which should have been omitted as was done in some other sections. Some of the terminology, interpretations and conclusions in the sections on pharmacology might not find the full approval of purists amongst pharmacologists and physiologists.

References to published work are numerous and only in very few cases is original work referred to incorrectly or misleadingly. One of these exceptions can be found on page 325 where it is stated that "by mouth the LD_{50} 's to man of a few organophosphates are about as follows. . . ." This might shake anyone who does not know the original paper from which this information was taken and which only lists "lethal doses" calculated from the inhibition of acetylcholinesterase by low doses of organophosphates.

The book is well produced, with the exception of some kymograph records, well indexed and cheap considering the wealth and quality of the information which it contains. It is undoubtedly a credit to the author and can be recommended to all who work on organophosphates or intend to do so, particularly if they are younger pharmacologists who are interested in biochemistry but have only limited or no biochemical training.

F. HOBBIER.