

BOOK REVIEWS

PHARMACOGNOSY OF AYURVEDIC DRUGS (Kerala). Series 1, No. 5. By K. Narayana Aiyar and M. Kolammal. Pp. vi + 123. Department of Pharmacognosy, University of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1962. Rs.10.

This book is No. 5 of a treatise describing the Ayurvedic drugs of India, especially those used in the province of Kerala (Travancore) in Southern India. The "Ayurveda" is an ancient Sanskrit text describing a system of medicine and the word means the "Science of Life." No. 5 contains a description of nine drugs arranged under their ayurvedic names. The nine drugs are derived from 22 plants, indicating the difficulty of attaching each name to a single plant. It is obvious, therefore, how necessary it is to publish the descriptions given in this book, thus providing a means of establishing their sources by accurate descriptions and excellent drawings, several of which are coloured, of the plants, as well as an account of the anatomy, accompanied by careful drawings, of the parts which are used medicinally in India. Each drug is described under two headings, first, the ayurvedic name followed by quotations in Sanskrit which is transliterated into arabic lettering; this is followed by a list of the many terms applied to its parts, together with the meaning in English of each term. The second heading is the modern botanical name beneath which is a careful description of the plant and then an account of the histology of those parts used medicinally. For the anatomical drawings the same abbreviations are used throughout the book and are listed in the introduction, thus avoiding repetition in the legend to each set of drawings.

Of the drugs described some are well known in European medicine:—

Kapikacchu from *Mucuna prurita* is usually named cowhage or itching powder and consists of the hairs of the fruit epidermis and used as a vermifuge for round-worm and thread-worm. Other parts are used medicially in India, viz. the roots and seeds.

Ksiravidari from *Ipomoea paniculata* (= *Batatas edulis*) yields the sweet potato, the starch of which is sometimes named Brazilian Arrowroot and may appear as a substitute or adulterant for some of the other starches used in European medicine and food.

Jambu from *Syzygium jambolanum* (= *Eugenia jambolana*) yields seeds, known in Europe as Jambool seeds and are said to be useful in diabetes. In addition the bark and fruits are used in India and the bark is fully described and its anatomy with drawings of details.

Kiratatiktah from *Andrographis paniculata* is well known and has been described in European literature as an adulterant or substitute for Chiretta and is used as a bitter tonic.

The book forms a valuable contribution to the knowledge of indigenous Indian medicinal plants and will help to encourage investigation of the very numerous herbal medicines so largely used in the Indian sub-continent.

T. E. WALLIS.

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PHARMACOLOGY AND THERAPEUTICS. Fifth, revised and enlarged, edition. By Arthur Grollman. Pp. 1131 (including Index and 236 illustrations). Henry Kimpton, London, 1962. 93s. 6d.

The appearance of the 5th Edition of Grollman's *Pharmacology and Therapeutics* coming as it does only two years after the 4th Edition and eleven years after the first, is a sure sign of a successful textbook. By American standards this is a medium-sized or even smallish book. Like earlier editions it is readable, lucid, well printed and well bound.

It is however very much a textbook of pharmacology and therapeutics aimed primarily at the undergraduate in medicine or the medical practitioner rather than a book which deals with the scientific basis of pharmacology. This is perhaps its greatest weakness as a text. On the other hand it is an up-to-date volume and deals with a very wide range of modern drugs and preparations, some of which are unfamiliar to the British reader.

Each chapter is supplied with a useful list of references for further reading, and where appropriate, with a list of relevant U.S.P. preparations. It is sad to see in this of all textbooks, that B.P. preparations are no longer included. The author, like all who write texts in pharmacology, has been faced with the dilemma of what to retain and what to leave out; thus relatively large sections are devoted to the bromides and cocaine whilst compounds such as halothane and the thiazide diuretics deserve more extensive treatment than they get. Nicotine is dealt with at length, yet suxamethonium receives only brief attention. Two pages are devoted to the Veratrum alkaloids which is more than the total space devoted to mecamlamine and guanethidine, and one would have liked to read more about griseofulvin. The book is undoubtedly very good in dealing with drug side effects, and there are a number of interesting and informative illustrations of these. Oddly enough, no mention is made of the side effects associated with thalidomide.

The chemical formulae shows some inconsistencies and the book would be improved if they were all re-drawn by the same hand and the formulae revised by an organic chemist. It is however a good book which repays reading. Perhaps its greatest value lies in the easy accessibility of a great deal of information—there is no need to cope with irrelevancies or repetition because these hardly exist. It will be welcomed by most undergraduates with a leaning towards the clinical applications of pharmacology. Others will find it of the greatest value when supplemented by the texts dealing with the scientific aspects of the subject.

J. J. LEWIS.