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BOOK REVIEWS

Natural Product Chemistry: edited by ATTA-UR-RAHMAN. Springer, Berlin, 1986. 564 pp. DM 368.

This all embracing title covers the proceedings of the first ever chemical symposium held in Pakistan. This took place in Karachi in February 1984. The book is a real rag bag of topics which range from the ability of garlic to lower blood cholesterol levels in poultry to the primary sequence of the haemoglobin of a tropical lizard. The 27 papers vary in style from those which are clearly written, with formulae and references, to some which simply reproduce slides given at the meeting and which are quite unintelligible. This volume is redeemed for me by at least three first class contributions; F. W. Lichtenthaler on the use of monosaccharides as chiral substrates for the synthesis of non-carbohydrate natural products, H. Schildknecht describing (in very idiosyncratic Germano-English) his recent identification of gallic acid glucose sulphates as leaf movement factors or turgorins and G. E. Prestwich on chemical defense in termites. One can hardly claim this book to be a must for the average phytochemist's library, but it does contain some worthwhile contributions.

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Flavonoids and Bioflavonoids, 1985: edited by L. FARKAS, M. GABOR and F. KALLAY. Akademiai Kiado, Budapest, 1986. 466 pp. Price not known.

It is 50 years since Szent-Gyorgyi first demonstrated in Szeged, Hungary the therapeutic value of a citrus flavonoid in improving capillary resistance in Man. At the time there was a great deal of hostility to the view that dietary flavonoids were a very curative value and the medicinal use of flavonoids was abandoned, at least in the USA, by 1962. However, it was highly appropriate that the VIIth Hungarian Bioflavonoid Symposium, of which the volume under review is the proceedings, should open with an address by Professor Gabor commemorating this discovery. Indeed, a perusal of this whole volume confirms that medical scientists have become interested once more in the pharmacological properties of the natural flavonoids, since the great majority of papers are devoted to this aspect of flavonoid research. Anyone wishing to obtain an overview of recent studies of the effects of flavonoids on mammalian systems needs to consult this volume.

Another important contribution of Hungarian scientists for the flavonoid field has been in the area of synthesis and this is reflected here in several papers. There are finally a few other papers on the natural occurrence of these pigments. The book is nicely edited and produced and it is a volume which all flavonoid scientists will wish to consult.

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