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BOOK REVIEWS

☐ The Story of Ergot: F. J. BOVÉ. S. Karger AG, Basel, Switzerland, 1970. 297 pp. 132s.

THE BOOK informs the reader about an old plant drug, which until recently has been of considerable economical importance. It is written in the short, clear-cut style used by the writers of modern prose and certainly will fascinate not only pharmacists, biochemists, biologists, physicians and historians but also intelligent laymen. The author, a pharmacist and member of the National Association of Science Writers, knows what is needed for writing a fascinating tale. He gives no dry monotonous history but a lively story of the scientists who worked on ergot and the problems they solved.

For those interested in a more detailed study of ergot, the book provides a path through "... a thick forest. A forest of literature. And a forest of confusion ...". It contains a large amount of carefully edited data on the pharmacognosy (nomenclature, life cycle, host-parasite relationship and history), on the structure and biochemistry of the alkaloids, pigments and other constituents and on the physiology, biological standardization, pharmacology and clinical uses of ergot. The references given at the end of each chapter make further studies possible. To facilitate easy reading by those who are not interested in a more serious study, practically no formulae and no indexes are provided. However, since the book of George Barker, *Ergot and Ergotism*, which appeared in 1931, no such complete survey of all facets of ergot and ergot research has been written. A survey "... the reader will enjoy reading. And add to his knowledge while enjoying himself."

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an MARTIN LUCKNER
orj hrv dhj Book review

Experimente zur Pflanzenphysiologie. Eine Einführung. (Experiments in plant physiology. An introduction): PETER SCHOPFER. Verlag Rombach, Freiburg. 418 pages, no price given.

IT HAS long seemed to me that plant physiologists at universities are somewhat reluctant to divulge the sort of experiments to which they subject their students in the laboratory. Accordingly, the present book is to be welcomed. The author clearly believes in the paramount importance of laboratory work well carried out and properly written up. Furthermore, many of the experiments described require a well-equipped and up-to-date laboratory including a centrifuge giving 30,000 g, a Warburg manometer apparatus capable of photosynthesis experiments and a good spectrophotometer. Peter Schopfer begins his Foreword with

"Modern investigation in plant physiology is characterized by an abundance of biochemical and biophysical research methods."

His book gives an excellent introduction to what this means.

It is divided into sixteen sections, section 1 being a general introduction to selected topics in laboratory practice with supporting theoretical treatment where appropriate. This section concludes with a brief treatment of bio-energetics mainly about Gibbs free energy and redox potentials.