

**Adrenergic Mechanisms** (Ciba Foundation Symposium Jointly with Committee for Symposia on Drug Action). J. R. VANE, G. E. W. WOLSTENHOLME and MAEVE O'CONNOR, (Editors) 1960. J. and A. Churchill Ltd., London. pp. 632, 70s.

AN EXCELLENT symposium, very well edited. It is a rare pleasure for those who have in some way taken part in this symposium to find correctly placed and expressed their opinions and suggestions besides the experimental facts. Very complete and carefully computed indexes of authors and of subjects much increase the usefulness of this book because it becomes easy to find what are the most recent facts and their various interpretations in any of the numerous fields covered by the general term of adrenergic mechanisms: synthesis of the catecholamines, their fate in the mammalian organism, the distribution of chromaffin cells, the storage of amines in peculiar granules both in adrenal medulla cells and postganglionic adrenergic fibres, the release of catecholamines by nerve stimulation or chemicals, the possible interference with the synthesis and the release of the transmitter. The actions of recently discovered inhibitors of catecholamine inactivation, (catechol pyrogallol), of TM 10, of Bretylium were much discussed. So was the relationship between structure and activity of amines and their antagonists. Much time was also devoted to the mode of action of catecholamines on the two various types of receptors ( $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ ) the existence of which, postulated by the pharmacologists, begins to interest the biochemists.

The action of sympathomimetic amines not bearing a catechol nucleus was given as much careful attention as the effects of amines, of their antagonists and metabolic inhibitors on the central nervous system, and in man.

It seems that during this symposium not a single stone remained unturned; even the history is very pleasantly presented by Sir Henry Dale who has devoted so much time fifty years ago to this a firm basis to our understanding of the actions of amines.

Thus, let us congratulate Doctor Vane and the British Pharmacological Society, Doctor Wolstenholme and the Ciba Foundation. It would be difficult indeed to surpass their standard.

Z. M. BACQ

E. H. MERCER and M. S. C. BIRBECK: **Electron Microscopy—a Handbook for Biologists**. Blackwell, Oxford, 1961, pp vi + 76, 9/6d.

BIOLOGISTS form the great majority of those using or wishing to use the electron microscope. Many are daunted by its complexity and retire, feeling that the preparative procedures must be equally complex. This small bench handbook, prepared by two of the most experienced biological electron microscopists in Britain, fills a much-needed gap between the standard physical textbooks on the subject (most of which are completely out-of-date as far as biological procedures are concerned) and the admirable textbook of histological procedures by Pease, which is not intended for the beginner.

The book is clear, concise and a veritable mine of "know-how", some of which has not previously been published. The recipes are set out in practical form in an appendix, a basic bibliography is included and the index is excellent. The body of the book explains the reasons behind the recipes (where these are known), enabling those who wish to do so to vary the procedures to suit their own material. I hope it will find a place in every biological laboratory, for, to quote from the preface to the book, "... were biologists to adopt more generally the practice of preparing their material up to the point where it is ready for the microscope, they would have little difficulty in persuading microscopists to look at it". How heartily do I echo this sentiment!

The only criticism I have to offer concerns the paper-back format. Such a useful cook-book will doubtless be very well thumbed in any working laboratory, and I feel that it deserves a hard cover, or a solvent-proof plastic one.

G. A. MEEK