

BOOK REVIEWS

Porphyrins, their Biological and Chemical Importance, by A. VANNOTTI. Translated by C. RIMINGTON, M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc., Hilger and Watts Ltd., London, 1954, x + 258 + xv pages. 12 illus., 15 plates. Price 50s. net.

In 1937 VANNOTTI, University-Professor at Lausanne, published his excellent monograph *Porphyryne und Porphyrynekrankheiten*. The present publication is in no sense a new revision of the first one but a new book embodying modern conceptions of pigment metabolism and recording much new material. The original was written in French and has been translated and revised by the well-known authority on porphyrins, Prof. C. RIMINGTON of the University College Hospital Medical School, London. This well-written monograph presents in an excellent way the biological and clinical problems of porphyrin chemistry.

VANNOTTI demonstrates that porphyrins exert numerous actions in the body and may play directly or indirectly through secondary biochemical or neuro-vegetative mechanisms, an essential part in the regulation of important vital phenomena in the body.

This monograph starts with a chapter on physio-chemical characteristics of porphyrins, the methods of extraction and qualitative and quantitative determination of porphyrins. It gives a useful survey of the occurrence of porphyrins in Nature. In the following chapters on physiological and pathological metabolism of porphyrin in man he discusses many of the existing theories and shows that up to now there is no general agreement on many points.

In dealing with the biological actions of porphyrins the writer discusses first their photosensitizing action, and then the action of porphyrins on the circulatory system, the action on the intestine and the general manifestations in the body, for instance the functional relationship between calcium, calcification, calcium balance and the metabolism of porphyrins. But a clinician as VANNOTTI cannot write a book about porphyrin without giving a clear picture of their pathological importance for the human being. The last chapters deal with porphyrin and the treatment of porphyrin diseases. The classification of porphyrins is still a point of discussion, and we think we have not reached a final agreement in this matter. The clinician and the general practitioner will find in the chapter "Treatment of Porphyrin diseases" what can be done to help their patients. Although we still cannot speak of a rational therapy for porphyria, we can say that today treatment has progressed from a purely symptomatic to a systematic basis which has recently given modest but nevertheless encouraging results. I think it is an excellent book that will satisfy everybody who is interested in this particular part of human pathology.

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Lehrbuch der Physiologischen Chemie, by S. EDLBACHER AND F. LEUTHARDT. Walter de Gruyter and Co., Berlin, 11. Auflage, 1954, 813 pages, 61 ill., D.M. 42.—.

This is the second edition of Professor LEUTHARDT's revision and extension of the well-known textbook by the late Professor EDLBACHER. The fact that a new edition had to be prepared so soon after publication of the 10th edition in 1952 proves the usefulness of this book.

There are no fundamental changes as compared to the previous edition (*Biochim. Biophys. Acta*, 11 (1953) 455). Some chapters have changed places and a new chapter on photosynthesis has been added. An important improvement is the addition of a reference list (of 25 pages) of modern books and reviews at the end of the textbook.

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