

prehensiveness in the representation of important areas. One finds an excellent review by Palay of new knowledge of neuronal structure achieved through electron microscopy, which biochemists are beginning to realize must form the framework in which chemical systems contribute to function. The chemical structure of the nervous system is represented by papers on the chromatographic properties of sphingosine by Wittenberg, on the structure of ribonucleic acid by Rich, and on fractionation of brain copper protein by Porter and Folch-Pi.

Some fundamental aspects of intermediary metabolism are discussed by Roberts on the formation and utilization of  $\gamma$ -aminobutyric acid, on enzymatic thioltransacetylation by Brady and Stadtman, on acetal phospholipids by Korey. The relationships of biochemistry to development are discussed in papers on adaptive enzyme formation in morphogenesis by Gordon, on developmental changes in enzymatic activity by Jordan and his associates, and on studies of over-all cerebral metabolism in children by Kennedy.

Biochemical mechanisms and their role in the functional activity of the nervous system are treated by papers on the biochemical correlates of stress by Nurnberger and Gordon, on acetylcholine activity by Wilson and Altamirano, and on cerebral metabolism and mental activity by Sokoloff. A number of papers discuss the biochemical correlates of neurological disease, including Wilson's disease by Scheinberg, epilepsy by Tower, and allergic encephalomyelitis by Goldstein and Kies.

The organizers of this symposium are to be congratulated for the role that they are playing in the ever-widening acceptance of the important place that biochemistry occupies in modern neurology.

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**Handbook of Scientific and Technical Awards in the United States and Canada.** Margaret A. Firth, Ed. Special Libraries Association, New York, 1956. 491 pp. \$10.

This selected listing of the most important awards presented by the leading scientific and technical societies in the United States and Canada is arranged alphabetically by names of the societies listed. The basic list used for the compilation was edition 8 of *Handbook of Scientific and Technical Societies of the United States and Canada*, 1948. All societies listed as presenting awards

were reviewed. Awards granted by foundations, publishers, universities, and companies are not included in this compilation.

Under each society listed the names of that organization's awards are arranged in alphabetical order. A brief description of each award is given, and information is included on the criteria for selecting recipients and the nature of the award (monetary, a medal, a citation).

An index to the listings of the United States and Canadian societies, a subject index of the awards, and a combined index of award titles and recipients are included. This compilation will fill a useful place on many reference shelves.

**Alcoholism as a Medical Problem.** A conference held under the auspices of the Committee on Public Health of the New York Academy of Medicine and the New York State Mental Health Commission. H. D. Kruse, Ed. Hoeber-Harper, New York, 1956. 102 pp. \$3.

This small book represents the material presented at a conference held under the auspices of the Committee on Public Health of the New York Academy of Medicine and the New York State Mental Health Commission. The material is edited by the executive secretary of the Committee on Public Health, and he also writes the preface to the book. There are eight chapters, which are the eight different papers presented at the meeting; included also is a certain amount of discussion by the 30 participants of the conference.

The purpose of this volume is best stated by quoting from the preface: "The sponsors of the conference had definite objectives: to introduce the problems of alcoholism to the physician; to create in him an appreciation of the magnitude of the disease with its frightening and tragic consequences; to direct his attention to his new responsibility to the alcoholic and to encourage him to assume it; to acquaint him with the basic medical facts and principles about alcoholism; and to stimulate research on the causes of this disease, and on the care and treatment of the patient."

This book has much excellent material in it, and it is difficult to decide which material to emphasize in a review of it. Chapter 1, "The epidemiology of alcoholism," is by John E. Gordon, professor of epidemiology, School of Public Health, Harvard University. Gordon's approach is somewhat different from the conventional approaches on the subject, and it is worth discussing in some detail. He maintains that alcoholism should be studied in the same manner as other diseases, such as tuberculosis. He would

therefore approach the problem by dividing the population into those who use alcohol as a beverage and those who do not use it at all. This he feels corresponds more properly with the public-health approach to such problems as tuberculosis and poliomyelitis. He compares it in this respect with poliomyelitis, nine-tenths of the cases of which he feels do not produce clinical recognition and are not actually medical problems.

He concludes: "A majority of adults in this country use alcohol. Abstinence is therefore not the norm. What part corresponds to infection and what part to disease? The more significant consideration is what part of infection is truly latent, ending benignly or conceivably even with benefit to the host, and what part is merely incubatory infection, destined to evolve into actual disease. More directly, what proportion of users of alcohol will eventually become alcoholics and what are the factors of host and environment that determine that result?"

Then follows an interesting discussion of the biologic gradient of alcoholism, the ecology of alcoholism, and control. Under this last heading he states: "No mass disease of man has ever been adequately controlled by attempt to treat the affected individual. Some progress can be made, there are ethical reasons for that approach, but if the objective is control of the condition in a population the fundamental approach is through definition of the nature and extent of the problem, the recognition of causative factors, and prevention. A program based on treatment of the exaggerated illness is temporizing and with no great promise of productive result; it is good clinical medicine but poor public health."

This conclusion seems to me to be of the greatest importance. At the present time there are many who wish to attack the problem of alcoholism merely by setting up more treatment facilities for the care of extreme cases of alcoholism. It is most important to emphasize the public-health approach and to warn all those who are now trying to do something about alcoholism that simply setting up more facilities for the treatment of alcoholics is never going to solve the problem of alcoholism.

Chapter 2, "Views on the etiology of alcoholism—I, The organic view," is by Harold E. Himwich, director of research, Galesburg State Research Hospital, Galesburg, Illinois. Himwich presents an interesting discussion of the theories of organic etiology, of the pharmacology of alcohol, and then attempts to discuss the organic basis for addiction. He points out that there are physiological mechanisms which are changed as a reaction of the organism to various substances and states: "... enzymatic changes in response to alteration of diet have also been found in mammals as well as in rats