while Cumins contributes an interesting account of lipid changes in experimental and human demyelinating processes and some views on the pathogenesis. Depressive states are discussed by Pratt and Curzon. In the lecture on Genetic Mental Disorders, Slater concentrates on Wilson’s disease, Schizophrenia and Huntington’s chorea, while Richter gives a detailed account of the biochemical aspects of phenylketonuria, a comprehensive list of genetically determined metabolic disorders, and an interesting discussion on the relation of genes to enzymes.

The editors are to be congratulated on this well produced book, which is a mine of useful information and should prove as popular as its predecessor.

Depression


This is a tape recording of a symposium held at Cambridge in 1959. It has been splendidly edited by Dr. Beresford Davies, who is the senior consultant psychiatrist to the United Cambridge Hospitals, so as to be eminently readable and never dull, despite its length.

One hundred and ninety participated in the symposium and among them were many of the most prominent British psychiatrists including the late Dr. W. Mayer Gross, the late Professor A. Kennedy, Sir Aubrey Lewis, Professor E. Stengel and Dr. W. Sargent, as well as a few representatives from other countries. The symposium was divided into four sections—clinical, psychological, neuropharmacological and therapeutic and each section comprised three or four main papers followed by the detailed proceedings of three to five discussion groups. Every aspect of depression is covered and there can be no doubt that the book will be of value to all psychiatric consultants and trainees. Sir Aubrey Lewis’s general review of depressive conditions and Dr. Sargent’s paper on the physical treatments of depression deserve special mention. One cannot help feeling, however, that had all the discussion group proceedings been omitted and the book reduced to the main papers it would have commanded a very wide circulation. As it is its price is so high and its size is so formidable that is will not commend itself to general physicians or general practitioners. A further difficulty is that publication was not possible until five years after the symposium took place and during that five years a host of new antidepressant drugs have become available.

Elastolysis and Ageing


This monograph in the American Lecture Series is written by the leader of the elastic tissue research group at Leeds University. In it Dr. Hall summarises what is known of the structure and biochemistry of elastic tissue and its changes with age.

Elastin, unlike collagen, has no characteristic X-ray diffraction patterns or electron microscopic appearances. It cannot therefore be studied by physical methods and chemical methods are essential. The principal technique has been the study of elastolysis, the name given to the new breakdown of elastin by the pancreatic enzymes, elastase and elastolipoproteinase.

Dr. Hall first reviews the properties of elastin itself. He then discusses the enzymes causing elastolysis and the substances which inhibit their action in vitro and in vivo. In a final chapter he discusses elastolysis in relation to the process of ageing and atherosclerosis. The susceptibility to elastolysis of elastic tissue in the wall of the aorta is minimal in the young but increases steadily with age. Dr. Hall postulates that this may be due to the loss with advancing years of inhibiting substances which prevent elastolysis in youth. Elastin is a lipoprotein and Dr. Hall suggests that separation of the lipid fraction may underlie the formation of the atherosclerotic plaque.

Dr. Hall gives nearly 300 references including 50 to work by himself or his colleagues but much of the book deals with hypothesis and there is evidently a need for much more research before this complex subject can be crystallised for the general medical reader. At present it is a field for specialists who will undoubtedly be stimulated by Dr. Hall’s challenging monograph.

Relations of Development and Ageing


This book present the proceedings of a conference of the Gerontological Society of America held at Miami Beach, Florida, in 1964.

The contributors are mostly psychologists and sociologists, though there are a few interesting contributions in other fields, particularly one on age changes in bones by Garn, Roham and Nolan.

Much of the psychology is very academic and will prove heavy going for the medical reader, but it is interesting to see the way in which research in gerontology is looking further and further back in an attempt to see the processes of ageing in relation to the whole span of human life. The child is after all father to the man.

ERRATUM:


Section headed Laboratory Tests, p. 632:

1. lines 6 and 7 should read “and will detect differing percentages . . .” instead of “but will not detect . . .”

2. bottom line should read “will range from 5 to 95% according to the severity of the deficiency.” instead of “5 to 9.5% . . .’.”