of the phenomenon in the context of the life of bacteria in their natural environment, or in the evolution of micro-organisms. This in my view is to miss much of the interest on bacterial conjugation, particularly from the viewpoint of the medical microbiologist.

Stouthamer's book is about twice as long as the other two, and correspondingly more expensive. It is a thoughtful and highly detailed account of a very narrow and quantitative aspect of microbiology. Moreover, it is one of great interest only, I suspect, to those interested in growing micro-organisms for industrial purposes. Certainly I cannot see much here that is likely to interest the average medical microbiologist, but that (of course) is not the author's main intention.

In summary, therefore, each of these books offers something, at least to some microbiologists, and the prices are certainly modest by modern standards. So much is to the good. But the low price has not been achieved without cost. The pictures in Finnegan's book are really awful in the quality of their reproduction, and the tables in Stouthamer's are often printed in such small type that I, at least, find it hard to read them. Only Smith's book has no imperfections in this respect, but it has no illustrations or tables, and so does not perhaps provide a fair test.

Finally I wonder whether anyone will really want to buy these small books. Perhaps they will, but really the accounts do little more than recapitulate review articles already written by these authors or their colleagues; and since these reviews are all in accessible journals, I personally would read the reviews rather than buy the booklets. The exception, might perhaps be Smith's book on microbial pathogenicity, where the account is more in the form of a balanced essay on the topic than the other two.

MARK RICHMOND

Applied medical microbiology

Why another general text in Medical Microbiology? Professor Collee answers this question by stating that this small book is designed to "set the scene" for biologists, medical and dental students, nurses and paraclinical technicians. It provides a "gentle introduction" to laboratory diagnosis, infectious disease mechanisms, epidemiology, disinfection and sterilisation, and chemotherapy and immunity, and uses important infectious diseases to illustrate the principles. All this is well done, and the text is enlivened by excellent illustrations, although it must be admitted that some of the "stickmen's" antics are a little difficult to follow.

It provides little discussion of taxonomy, nomenclature, or identification of bacteria—perhaps because the student is expected to refer to other books for these. Curiously, however, there is much more detail on immunological, virological and even mycological procedures. Although most teachers will feel that the move away from systematic bacteriology is highly laudable in this context, others will regret the omission of any definition of such words as "Gram", "agar" and "phage". Perhaps a glossary of such terms could be included in the next edition.

All in all, this is an excellent little book, which should prove useful to teachers of elementary medical microbiology who wish to avoid discussion of technical matters.

I. PHILLIPS

Animals for medical research

About one-quarter of the volume, two chapters, is taken up with the nutrition, breeding and management of experimental animals and a brief description of their diseases under laboratory conditions. However, it is surprising that the authors found it necessary to