BOOKS RECEIVED

Concanavalin A as a tool

Concanavalin A sprang into the limelight 7 years ago when it was recognised that certain plant lectins agglutinated tumour cells. Unfortunately, hopes that this might lead to the identification of a site at the cell surface involved in the control of growth and movement have not been fulfilled, but, on the credit side, a great variety of new approaches to the study of the cell surface has been developed.

This book sets out to summarise this work. It avoids too much speculation, and is essentially a laboratory handbook. Apart from a short but reasonably complete summary of the known facts about the chemistry of concanavalin A and its reaction with cells, it is a compendium of methods described by leading workers in the field. They deal with the localisation of concanavalin A by microscopy and electronmicroscopy, assay methods, agglutination, molecular and cellular separations by concanavalin A, and biological uses, for example in the mitogenesis of lymphocytes. The contributions are concise, authoritative, and (in those cases where I am able to judge) complete. This book is to be recommended to anyone interested in the cell surface.

C. H. O'NEILL

Recent advances in clinical virology

This is the first issue of the well known Recent Advances series that deals exclusively with virology, a subject that was previously included in the general microbiology text. For better or for worse this reflects the increasing divergence of the pathways of virological and bacteriological advance.

A wide range of virological topics of either clinical or academic interest is covered, respiratory viral disease being the only major subject of current interest that is omitted. Exactly half of the contributions are concerned with neurological disease, a bias that is understandable as this is the field where there is growing anticipation of important advances in the near future. This part of the book begins with an account of the diagnosis and treatment of herpes encephalitis, a disease that is still unfortunately proving refractory to antiviral chemotherapy. There are also accounts of the respective roles of measles virus and the papovaviruses in subacute sclerosing panencephalitis and progressive multifocal leucoencephalopathy: the first account concentrates on pathogenesis, and the second contains...