Inevitably, though, progress here will be slow in comparison with some aspects of the interferon field. In many ways the most enjoyable contribution in this book is that by Charles Weissmann called “The cloning of interferon and other mistakes”. This article is breathtaking in the elegance and achievements of the science it describes and is also written with considerable wit, spiced with the occasional pithy comment. Most fascinating of all is the insight it gives into the events surrounding the impressive biotechnological achievement of bacterial interferon production. A description is presented of the setting up of a commercial enterprise to exploit this development and the reader is permitted a glimpse into life in the genetic engineering jet set.

With the remaining chapters—“Genetic control of the interferon system” by Slate, Ruddle and Tan and “Mechanisms of interferon action: the (2’-5’) (A)n synthetase-RNAase L pathway” by Lengyl, the latter being the most biochemically detailed of the articles—this latest collection of personal views on various facets of this field should find a place on the bookshelves of scientists of many disciplines and backgrounds.

M. CLEMENS


This volume is on of a series of almost encyclopaedic tomes concerning immunological topics. Like its predecessors this volume is scholarly, broadly based and produced in a manner more reminiscent of enduring classics than of books on rapidly evolving subjects. Unfortunately, this approach is also reflected in the leisurely speed with which it has apparently come to market. The reference lists betray the long gap that obviously evolved between the submission of many chapters and publication, although only Dr Finkelstein has had the foresight to record this point specifically. Fortunately, this dalliance has affected most of the contributions to this book less seriously than would have been the lot of most immunological texts. In contrast with many areas where speculation has outpaced the available facts, the immunology of infectious agents is based on the methodical, painstaking accumulation of data concerning the structural antigens of different organisms, their immunogenicity and host immune responses in vivo. The chapters on bacterial immunity in general, and the immunology of staphylococcal, streptococcal, and Haemophilus influenzae infections are wholly admirable and there are equally impressive contributions dealing with infections by Neisseria meningitidis, diphtheria, Bordetella pertussis, enterobacteria and Vibrio cholerae. The chapter on the latter by Dr Finkelstein should be singled out as the proper way to weave a vast array of facts in a coherent narrative that stimulates both interest and imagination. All these chapters are restrained in their discussion of biological riddles so that the absence of many publications beyond 1978 is less serious. Certainly our understanding of rheumatic fever has not progressed since Lewis Wannamaker addressed the problem in his chapter on the “Immunology of streptococci”, and the facts so coolly marshalled in the chapters concerning enterobacteria should serve to restrain facile theories about possible relationships between gut infection and reactive forms of immunopathology.

The contributions on infection by Mycobacterium tuberculosis, M. leprae and fungal infections are competent and thoroughly documented accounts of these subjects but are more frequently dealt with in the numerous monographs on immunological topics that have appeared in the last decade. Recent developments in cellular immunology have also overtaken these contributions more swiftly than those dealing with the other subjects in this book; for example, much of the chapter on candida infections concerned with treating this condition has been made irrelevant by the introduction of ketoconazole.

This book is recommended to microbiologists with a particular interest in selective problems of infection and immunity but they should first take care to establish that the microorganism that interests them is included in the volume. Investigators who rightly ruminate about the odd immunopathological consequences of host-parasite relationships will also find much for their comfort. The publishers and editors would be well advised to consider whether volumes with so long an incubation period can fairly be termed modern texts on immunology.

A. M. DENMAN