BOOK REVIEWS

The pathogenesis of infectious disease

By C. A. MIMS. 1976. London: Academic Press Ltd. Pp. x and 246. £6-80.

Professor Mims has achieved a unified presentation of a large and complex subject within 250 clearly written pages. No one with an interest in infectious disease could fail to benefit from either rapid or close perusal of this book. It well deserves to become a classic text.

The following chapter headings indicate sufficiently the style and content: general principles; entry of micro-organisms into the body; events occurring immediately after the entry of the micro-organism; the encounter of the microbe with the phagocytic cell; the spread of microbes through the body; the immune response to infection; microbial strategies in relation to the immune response; mechanisms of cell and tissue damage; recovery from infection; failure to eliminate the microbe; host and microbial factors influencing susceptibility.

Despite its relative brevity the book is crammed with information, and this leads to two criticisms that might be made by professional microbiologists. First, the reader is continually finding brief and fascinating statements that are not attributed and are therefore difficult to follow up, and second, many of the figures could well have been omitted, giving over the extra space to an extended bibliography. For example, figures 12, 15, 18, 25 and 27 take up a lot of space without adding significantly to the lucidity of the text.

These are very minor faults in an admirable book which will be read and re-read by students of all ages.

K. R. DUMBELL

The Shorter Bergey's Manual of Determinative Bacteriology

Edited by J. G. HOLT. 1977. 8th ed. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins. Pp. xv and 365; 19 plates. US\$15.95.

Bergey's Manual of Determinative Bacteriology (8th ed., edited by R. E. Buchanan and N. E. Gibbons) is "meant to assist in the identification of bacteria" and this, the shorter version, brings such assistance to those who require it in a more portable and less expensive form. Like the full manual, the shorter version is a statement of the results of attempts at bacterial classification rather than an account of how to achieve them, and this should be remembered by those who want a bench manual; they will have to look elsewhere for details of methods.

The general plan of the Shorter Bergey's Manual is like that of the full manual. After two useful and brief introductory chapters, and the dismissal of the cyanobacteria (as we must now call the blue-green algae), the bacteria are subdivided into 19 easily comprehensible groups, about two-thirds of which include bacteria of medical interest. Information on each group is given as a series of keys and tables taken largely from the full manual and "based on the latest thinking on classification". Needless to say, these thoughts will not please everyone. The series of plates from the full manual is also included, but contains little of medical interest, and the book is rounded off with a useful glossary and index that is detailed, but much shorter than the one from which it was derived. The parts of the large manual that are omitted include etymological notes, extensive descriptions of each species, Skerman's Key to the Genera, and most of the references. On the other hand, a small amount of new information is incorporated.

The 8th edition is much easier to use than the 7th and a mass of information on the whole range of bacteria is now made readily accessible. However, there is little clue in many of the sections of the anarchy behind the superficially impressive order, despite a general statement