BOOKS RECEIVED

Pathogenic streptococci

Edited by M. T. PARKER. 1979. Chertsey: Reedbooks Ltd. Pp. 296. £21.

A collection of 156 miscellaneous papers on streptococci may seem a daunting prospect for even the most dedicated of readers. However, this large volume has the good fortune to be edited by Dr M. T. Parker, whose surgical skill is evident throughout. Indeed, some of the contributions occupy no more than a dozen or so lines—whether due to drastic resection or idiopathic inanition is uncertain. Another notable feature is the publication of this volume within 9 months of the Oxford symposium it perpetuates. This is a respectable gestation period for future editors to note, but is all too rare in a medical book.

A little more than 100 years since their discovery (either by Billroth in Vienna, or Ogston in Aberdeen—depending on personal bias), the streptococci are still doing remarkably well. This is attested by the seven international symposia held since 1960, and of course by Dr Parker's book. Sir Robert Williams, in his delightful opening paper, sketches the decline of that archetypal pathogen, the group-A haemolytic streptococcus, but much light is still being shed—albeit obliquely, in its present eclipsed state. The 83 papers on its structure, extracellular products, immunology, genetics, antibiotic susceptibilities, and clinico-pathological effects look askance at its supposed demise. Considerable attention is of course also paid to the currently more luminous satellites, notably the fascinating group-B streptococci and *Streptococcus mutans* which has risen again as the leading "cariogenic" species, 55 years after its discovery by Killian Clarke.

The "cross-reactive" nature of discussions on streptococci leads, as Dr Parker points out, to editorial problems, but also provides a wide readership with a cornucopia of discoveries. Thus, even the most erudite of skin microbiologists or human micro-ecologists will be delighted to learn about skin infections among abattoir workers, the enhanced ability of group-A streptococci from skin sepsis to survive and thrive under rigorous conditions compared with the more pampered "throat" strains, the possible epidermal origin of at least some viridans bacteraemias and endocarditides, the defensive role of "viridins" from α -haemolytic streptococci in the oropharynx, and—most unexpected of all—the demonstration by Clewell and colleagues that some strains of *Streptococcus faecalis* var. *zymogenes* exert sex appeal on their neighbours by secreting pheromones to "enhance to mating potential of donors."

Despite the surprising inclusion of a section of advertisements, the book is unfortunately very expensive. Nevertheless, departments of medical microbiology would be well advised to disburse £21 even at the risk of their financial solvency.

SYDNEY SELWYN

Hospital-associated infections in the compromised host

Edited by G. P. BODEY and V. RODRIQUEZ. 1979. New York and Basel: Marcel Dekker, Inc. Pp. xi and 263. SwF 74.

This is the second volume of the "Handbook on hospital associated infection". The first dealt with occurrence, diagnosis and sources, and more volumes are in preparation. The intention of the series is to present "a concise review of the state of the art" but also to make the series "references for hospital personnel interested and concerned with nosocomial infections". This is a tall order but it implies in-depth study of individual problems whilst not omitting subjects for reference purposes. It is in this latter respect that the current volume may be criticised, for although there is, for example, an excellent review of immunodeficiency in the cancer patient with a detailed description of methods of testing for lymphocyte function, this has