or prognosis. I cannot help feeling that the overall result would have been more even and more compact if the authors had distilled their unquestioned talents into a smaller number of vessels. For experts, there are some oddly naïve remarks like the suggestion that tonsillectomy helps to explain endocarditis in edentulous patients (much more convincingly explained later by gum-grinding and ill-fitting dentures) or the expectation that doubts over the efficacy of antibiotic prophylaxis will be resolved by clinical studies. Guidance on the role of the laboratory is not very full, methodologically speaking, nor very positive and many will be dismayed to see even the mention of doubling dilutions as a means of assessing serum antibiotic concentrations in this dangerous condition.

Now for the good news. They cover the ground pretty comprehensively, even if not always very evenly, and identify the main literature. Despite a few disagreements (including some within chapters, e.g., what to do about streptomycin therapy in the presence of renal failure), they present a united front on such central issues as: five blood cultures are enough; fever will be revealed by rectal temperature taken four times a day; penicillin desensitisation is feasible and proper treatment; reassurance that therapy is satisfactory is provided by showing that the patient's serum diluted 1 in 8 is bactericidal for his infecting organism at the expected time of peak antibiotic concentration.

Overall, what emerges very clearly 20 years after Kerr's account of the disease, is that optimum therapy and the role of the laboratory in management are still far from solidly established. I urge you to read the book. At £12.25, it is good value, and perhaps some will be so incredulous at the fundamental questions still outstanding that they will be stimulated to produce the answers in time for the early appearance of the definitive and final instalment in the saga of this fascinating disease.

F. O'GRADY

Microbial ultrastructure: the use of the electron microscope

Edited by R. FULLER and D. W. LOVELOCK. 1976. London: Academic Press Inc. Pp. xiv and 340. £10.80.

This is essentially a picture book of micro-organisms and as such will be a useful and attractive addition to a number of different laboratory libraries. The major part of the book belongs to the bacteria, but there are sections on yeasts, fungi and protozoa. For the most part, authors of the individual chapters state the techniques that they have used in the study of microbial structure, and then proceed to discuss the scientific implications of their morphological findings. The book might have had greater practical value if the authors had been encouraged to describe technical procedures in greater detail as many of the micrographs are of outstanding technical quality and the writers could well have offered help to those less adept. Another criticism concerns the micrographs themselves. Whether in order to include as many illustrations as possible, or whether to comply with the somewhat small format of the book, many of the micrographs are reproduced at an insufficient magnification to reveal details that one knows instinctively are there.

However, the satisfactory aspects of the book outweigh these shortcomings and it should be of considerable practical value to specialists working in the field of microbial structure. Information that normally has to be culled from diverse, and sometimes obscure, sources, has now been brought together into one convenient volume.

It should also be of interest to those involved in any aspect of microbiological study, as the lavish illustrations and relatively brief text give a quick insight into the field of bacterial morphology. Even further afield, it could be of interest to all those electron microscopists who occasionally find that their specimen contains an unexpected and unwanted organism. Recourse to the numerous micrographs could well result in a similar structure being found and a rapid identification being made.

Finally, as so often happens with illustrations obtained by the technique of scanning electron microscopy, many of the illustrations can be acclaimed on the basis of artistic merit as well as scientific context.

JUNE D. ALMEIDA