Bochum and claims to have 'no precedent on the market'. Certainly, it would be difficult to name another single current volume, of manageable size, that attempts to deal with the complement system and its relevance to disease. The book is aimed, so say the publishers, at 'hospital physicians and clinical pathologists', and, as is so often the case with symposium proceedings, it will satisfy neither fully. The clinician will be deterred by the first two sections on methods and method standardisation—largely because many clinicians are either bored or bemused by graphs of haemolytic assays and blurred photographs of immunoelectrophoresis. If they take the self-indulgent step of omitting the first 60 pages, they will then come face-to-face with five succeeding sections which deal with the complement components in a wide selection of disease states. Diagnosis and prognosis using complement assays are dealt with in relation to the haematopoietic system, the respiratory system (newborn respiratory distress syndrome), CMV infections, the autoimmune disorders, liver disease, and neurological disorders. The quality of papers is very variable: there are some thoughtful reviews of the current state of ignorance, for example, by Petz, who discusses the problems of choosing Coombs' reagent, and by Snyderman and McCartney, who give a systematised account of the usefulness (or otherwise) of complement assays, particularly in relation to SLE.

The book also includes a series of six papers, grouped as 'Pathophysiology', which deal largely with experimental data on the function of complement *in vitro*, with some extrapolations to its *in-vivo* behaviour. There are four papers dealing with complement and activation by drugs, which include three interesting studies on the effects of radiographic contrast media; these help to explain some of the rather frightening adverse reactions that have been encountered since the introduction of the soluble derivatives of triiodobenzoic acid (for example, methylglucamine diatrizoate). The adverse effect of these compounds when given in relatively high dosage is mainly produced through the alternate pathway, either by direct activation or by activation of proteolytic enzymes which, in turn, cleave complement proteins. Antibody is not involved, and there may well be associated activity within the coagulation cascade and fibrinolytic systems.

The genetic aspects of the complement

system are dealt with in the final series of presented papers. Despite the relative rarity of genetically determined deficiencies of complement components, these are proving a fruitful source of material for the study of the biological role of complement proteins in the intact animal, rather as the inborn errors of metabolism helped to clarify the enzymatic pathways for the biochemists. The clinicians may be happy to see the 'complementologists' weaned away from their obsessive preoccupation with sheep red cells, and will eventually gain insight into some hitherto unexplained disorders of defective bacterial handling and auto-immune disorders.

Like many collections of symposium proceedings, this book resembles the legendary 'curate's egg'—it's very good in parts. But, unlike the unhappy curate, anxious to please his host, the bishop, I would perhaps point out—it's bad in parts. To attract the clinical reader, one would have to remove the detailed technical papers; to interest the laboratory worker one needs rather more than a few enthusiastic exponents of C_3 assays to expound the merits and demerits of the assay systems. However, it is encouraging to see an attempted marriage of clinician and laboratory worker, particularly over the anvil of complement, which has for so long been a puzzle to the one and an esoteric discipline to the other. Some of the discussion sections are perhaps the most enlightening parts of the book because they often reveal the great gaps that still exist, both in understanding how complement works and its relationship to normal and disease states. With all its defects, this book marks an interesting stage in the natural history of complement and human tissues, and it should attract the immunologist practising in the medical environment—even if only for future comparison with what may be published in 10 years' time.

HEATHER M. DICK

Clinics in Endocrinology and Metabolism. Volume 8, No. 1. 'Hypothyroidism and Goitre'. Edited by D. Evered and R. Hall. (Pp. vii + 245; illustrated; Single issue price £8.25.) London, Philadelphia, Toronto: W. B. Saunders. 1979.

The introduction of immunological tests for thyroid autoantibodies and of radio-immunoassays for the measurement of the hormones of the pituitary thyroid system has resulted in a resurgence of interest in diseases of the thyroid. The

two editors of this volume, who have themselves contributed greatly to the new knowledge, have enlisted a distinguished group of authors to assist them in producing a companion to an earlier volume in this series which was devoted to hyperthyroidism.

This is a rich collection of reviews with something of interest to everyone. There are chapters on congenital hypothyroidism, endemic goitre and cretinism, and dysor-monogenetic goitre; there are others on the aetiology, epidemiology, immunology, and investigation of hypothyroidism; and still more on goitrogens, non-toxic goitre, thyroid nodules, tumours, and cancer. Each chapter is clearly and concisely written and contains a multitude of references, including many from 1978. This compact book is highly recommended.

R. L. HIMSWORTH

Handbook of Clinical Neurology. Series Editors: P. J. Vinken and G. W. Bruyn. Volume 35. 'Infections of the Nervous System'. Part III. Edited by P. J. Vinken and G. W. Bruyn in collaboration with H. L. Klawans. (Pp. xii + 584; illustrated; US\$10.675, Dfl. 240.00.) Amsterdam, New York, Oxford: North-Holland Publishing Company. 1978.

This is the last of three volumes concerned with infections of the nervous system in a series of 36 volumes on clinical neurology. This volume has 27 chapters written by 34 authors drawn almost equally from North America, South America, and Europe, although one is South African.

There are chapters on infections by protozoa, helminths, and mycotic agents, and these cover actinomycosis, amoebic infections, angiostrongylus cantonensis, ascariasis, aspergillosis, candidosis, coccidioidomycosis, cryptococcosis, cysticercosis, echinococcosis, filariasis, helminthiasis, histoplasmosis, malaria, a review of mycosis, North American blastomycosis, nocardiosis, paracoccidioidomycosis, paragonimiasis, phycomycosis (mucormycosis), schistosomiasis, toxoplasmosis, trichinosis, and trypanosomiasis. A final chapter refers to a series of rather uncommon fungal diseases and includes references often to single case reports of *allescheria boydii*, *alternariasis*, *cephalosporiosis*, *cladosporiosis*, *diplorhinotrichosis*, *drechsleri* *asiasis*, *fonseca* *asiasis*, *madurellosis*, *paecilomycosis*, *penicilliosis*, *sporotrichosis*, *streptomycosis*, *torulopsias*,