Notwithstanding this minor caveat, this is the best biology book of the year.

P N GOODFELLOW

The Neurobiology of Down syndrome

Edited by Charles J Epstein. (Pp 271; £51.50.) New York: Raven Press. 1986.

This hardback book is based on the National Down Syndrome Society Conference on the Neurobiology of Down Syndrome held in 1985 in New York. Accordingly it is a miscellany of contributions but the main thrust is towards an understanding of the manifestations of Down's syndrome in the light of neuropathological and neurochemical findings, and of special considerations, such as the potential of gene dosage at a cellular level during development of the central nervous system.

The contributions are of a consistently high standard. Many are of specialist interest. The neurochemical contributions by Balazs and Brooks-bank and by McCoyt and Ens are outstanding in their erudition and detail. On the other hand, some chapters constitute a purview and may be of more general interest, such as that on the neurology of Down's syndrome by Ira Lott. Each chapter is followed by its own references and at the end of the book there is a good subject index.

In the preface it is stated that the volume is directed to a spectrum of groups including physicians, human and animal geneticists, neurobiologists with a variety of interests, and behavioural scientists. Undoubtedly, workers in each of these categories will find particular attraction towards at least some parts of the book, but the specialism of a number of contributions preclude its general interest to a wide readership. Also, there is a likelihood that the book may soon become outdated by work that is going apace at the present time.

With these reservations, this is a book with contributions of a high scientific standard that marks the shift of emphasis in the study of Down's syndrome from general clinical observations to a detailed examination of neurobiological mechanisms often at a cellular level.

VALERIE A COWIE

Advances in Gene Technology: Molecular Biology of the Endocrine System

Edited by D Puett *et al.* (Pp 402; £25.50.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1986.

The proceedings of the 18th Miami Winter Sympo-

sium held in February 1986 are recorded in this book. At a first glance, the volume appears to be merely a collection of abstracts. However, the format is a new method of reporting symposia proceedings under the aegis of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) Short Reports Series. The prime objective is to commit to paper, which can be cited in the literature, the vast number of poster presentations which are now commonplace at international scientific meetings.

Thus, volume 4 in the ICSU Short Reports Series is divided into six main sections dealing with the molecular biology of: Peptide and polypeptide hormones, Growth factors and oncogenes, Peptide and protein receptors, Glycoprotein hormones, Steroid receptors and gene regulation and, lastly, Lymphokines, interleukins, interferons and receptors. Each invited speaker is awarded a four page report while the 129 posters are recorded in two page reports. The reproduction of figures showing gel analyses is often sub-standard but this does not detract from the vast amount of useful, up to date information packed into this volume. I commend the ICSU for this reporting system in an area of biology which is growing so fast.

I A HUGHES

Molecular Biology of Muscle Development

Edited by C Emerson, D Fischman, B Nadal-Ginard, and M A Q Siddiqui. (Pp 988; £34.00.) New York: Alan R Liss. 1986.

This book represents the proceedings of a Roche-UCLA symposium held in Park City, Utah, in March 1985. I attended this meeting in person and find this book to be a valuable record of the proceedings. This is the third book over the last five years that records developments in muscle gene expression and its application to neuromuscular disease. This book adopts the same format as the previous volumes, with sections on cellular aspects of myogenesis, membranes and matrix, protein polymorphism, gene organisation and expression, myofibrillar assembly, cardiac muscle, and human muscular dystrophies, a total of 69 chapters in all. The main virtue of the book is that it is current and all of the major groups that are working on cellular or molecular aspects of myogenesis have contributed chapters. The space allocation for each author is not large, so the chapters are more summaries of ongoing work rather than detailed reviews. The book is therefore a good starting point for finding out what is current in myogenesis and for directing additional reading.