

Preface

In Nature's infinite book of secrecy
A little I can read

(Shakespeare—*All's Well That Ends Well*)

The wide variety of polymers in Nature impinges on every aspect of our existence, and currently exciting advances are being made in all areas of the field.

It is against this background that we have outlined the present state of knowledge of the structure, properties, and functions of these fascinating substances. We bring together in this book the whole spectrum of different natural macromolecules—both organic and inorganic—with all their inherent variations.

The range of these natural polymeric materials is so wide that a complete coverage is not possible, but examples have been chosen from each different class of macromolecules to illustrate the types of problems which are encountered in any particular field. Necessarily some groups of polymers have not been included because they have not yet been investigated in sufficient detail, for example, the polylipids of plants.

The book is intended as a text for undergraduates in chemistry, biochemistry, agricultural chemistry, and related subjects, and also as supplementary material for graduate courses on polymers. Additional reading material is included in each chapter for further study.

Finally, we are grateful to our former colleague, Dr. I. G. Jones, for his helpful commentary on the chapter dealing with nucleic acids.

E.A.M.
C.T.G.