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Book Notices

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Genetics, Medicine, and Man

This book contains the text of six Messenger Lectures, two by each of three eminent geneticists, talking from his own research experience on the given tripartite subject. Dr. Muller presents the fundamentals of genetics with simple language in a manner that provides a refreshing review, especially for anyone whose only previous contact with genetics has been by way of the complexities of an elementary text book course. The effects of the mechanism of sexual reproduction on evolution are discussed in relation to directing them toward long term human welfare.

Dr. Little defines genetics as "the science of studying parental influence upon offspring." He takes a broad view to the extent of including items which orthodox geneticists would classify as purely environmental (non-generic) influences. For convenience, he distinguishes three overlapping categories of influence: morphogenetic, endocrine-emotional, and psycho-social. The simple points which he makes in plodding complicated style are: that every gene is always in some kind of an environment, and, that such things as physiological reactions, emotional stability, and social behavior are affected by genes as well as by environment. The advantages of seeking knowledge of man indirectly through a study of laboratory mammals over studying humanity directly are emphasized.

Dr. Snyder's fine style provides a satisfying finale for the book. It deals with the segment of the theme which will be of most interest to non-geneticists. He points out the direct, practical applications of genetics to man that are already being made. A discussion of some of the special problems which the study of human heredity presents and examples of some methods through which they are being outmaneuvered are explained. Genetic maps of human chromosomes are illustrated.—Elton F. Paddock.