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Book Notice

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In this book Professor Goldschmidt has set out to write a short and easily readable account of the basic facts of genetics, which would be useful as a text for an elementary course in genetics for students not specializing in biology, and could also be read with understanding by the layman. The result fulfills these objectives admirably. The presentation is simple, clear, and well balanced.

There are a few minor faults. Although it is emphasized that experimentally determined Mendelian ratios are subject to sampling error, cross-over frequencies are said to be “precisely” repeatable in experiments made under identical conditions. Figure 17E on page 50 is labeled a maturation division but appears rather to be a pollen grain mitosis. In addition, the discussion of the general applicability of Mendel’s laws on page 66 may lead to some misconceptions. Goldschmidt qualifies the term “Mendelize” to include “all the more or less complicated behavior of the genetic elements which can be derived from the simple case” and then goes on to say that in this sense all inheritable characteristics can be said to “Mendelize.” However, the nature and importance of the qualifications are not likely to be appreciated by the neophyte who may then expect to find simple modes of inheritance wherever he looks for them. It would be less misleading to say that it is the genes which Mendelize, and that a trait will appear to do so or not as it is more or less directly determined by a gene.

Simplified explanation of a complicated subject without distortion is in many ways more difficult to accomplish than a more advanced presentation. Professor Goldschmidt has brought unusual skill to the task and has written a book that should make the subject matter of genetics available to any reasonably interested and intelligent person.

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