

REVIEWS

VARIATION AND HEREDITY. By H. Kalmus. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1958. Pp. 227+xi. 28s.

This work is part of a survey of human biology and in it Dr Kalmus has discussed various aspects of human variation with particular reference to its causation. There are useful sections on the application of modern genetics to problems of clinical medicine, genetic counselling, racial inter-marriage, eugenics and the genetic aspects of radiation hazards.

Human variation cannot be understood without a knowledge of simple Mendelian genetics. Consequently the author of a book such as this one should either provide an explanation of simple Mendelism or say that he is assuming that the reader has such elementary knowledge. Kalmus does provide sections on genetics, but, in my opinion, the text is too advanced for the beginner and too elementary to be useful to most students with a more advanced knowledge. It would have been better to have left out much of the text devoted to explaining genetics and to have used the space for a more extended treatment of the application of genetics to human affairs.

The text is fairly free of misprints and errors but unfortunately the same cannot be said of many of the figures. I have detected fifteen more or less serious errors in fig. 9 by comparing it with the original. Six blood-group determinations have been omitted from fig. 8 and four of these give important information on linkage. Furthermore, the reference to the original source is incorrect. The text of fig. 6 is inadequate since it suggests that the pedigree excludes close linkage between the P blood-group system and ectrodactyly, whereas neither the figure nor the data in the original paper quoted even exclude the possibility that the two are absolutely linked! The reference in the text to fig. 5 is not given in the bibliography and the number 96·44426 in table 8 should, I think, be 96·44303.

Despite these errors the text can be recommended to students of human variation who wish to read an unbiased account of human variation in relation to heredity. In fact the author sometimes appears to go to considerable lengths in order not to reveal his own personal opinion on certain topics. The book should be particularly useful to those geneticists who are not accustomed to working with data on human genetics.

P. M. SHEPPARD.

UNCOMMON PEOPLE. A study of England's Elite. By Paul Bloomfield. London: Hamish Hamilton. 1956. Pp. 210+xi. 21s.

An account of the pedigrees and breeding systems of certain intellectually outstanding lines contributing to the British governing class since the sixteenth century: notably, the Villiers, Cecil, Wedgwood, Darwin, Strachey, Penrose, Barclay and Buxton Connections. The study of this evidence should be widely interesting to geneticists who will wish to follow up the references and quotations. Unfortunately there is no list of sources.

C. D. D.