

GENETICS AND THE RACES OF MAN : An Introduction to Modern Physical Anthropology.
By W. C. Boyd. Oxford : Blackwell. 1950. Pp. xvii+453. 30s.

As indicated by Professor Boyd in his subtitle to *Genetics and the Races of Man*, this book is intended specially for students of physical anthropology. The need for a textbook supplying anthropologists with a genetical background for their investigations on the measurement of man has long been evident. Let it be said at once that Professor Boyd's book supplies this want in a satisfactory manner.

Professor Boyd's approach to the subject which is set forth in the first chapter, is that anthropology without racial prejudice is possible and, indeed, necessary. In scientific enquiry no peoples are superior or inferior to others ; they are just different from one another. The careful introduction to genetics which follows is suitable for students acquainted only with the elements of biology. Ideas, which are especially important in human genetics, such as the interaction of heredity and environment, gene frequency, equilibrium in the presence of natural selection and "drift," are competently discussed. Although there is not as yet general agreement upon many of the points raised it is advantageous to stimulate biological and genetical thinking among anthropologists by bringing these problems to their notice. The adaptive value of skin colour is stated as a fact ; this is perhaps reasonable but the adaptive value of dwarf populations where food supply is limited is more dubious. Race can be defined as a "constellation of characters" and in many other ways. In view of his admission that the original human strains cannot now be identified it would have been more logical for the author to have advocated dropping the word "race" altogether. Description of populations in terms of gene frequencies, mean cephalic indices or mean skin colours, is quite objective. The retention of the word "race" with its taxonomic implications, which Professor Boyd discards as unscientific, even if a new definition is provided, seems quite unnecessary.

A great deal of well-tabulated factual information is provided in the book. It is not quite up to date, but that will not seriously affect the value of the book in the sphere where it is intended to be used. A number of useful statistical methods are described in appendices but, in discussing the coefficient of racial likeness, and in pointing out its deficiencies, no reference is made to Zarahin's very convenient measure. This coefficient is equivalent to the variance of a set of standardised character differences between populations and it has been successfully used by Cavalli. The account of technique of taste testing is quite inadequate and the reader will look elsewhere for the very latest results of blood grouping of populations with the newer antigens. Little attention has been given to the question of the distribution of genes for inherited diseases or metabolic anomalies, such as sickle cell trait, thalassæmia, phenylketonuria and xyloketosuria which are known to have very marked local frequency differences. Moreover the table of Mendelian characters in man, pp. 318-320, is so full of flagrant errors that it could best be described as an erratum for immediate and total deletion. For a textbook of over 400 pages on a subject not previously treated in this manner the number of misleading statements included is not large and the reader's interest is maintained throughout.

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