

THE NATURE OF FOWL NEPHRITIS. W. G. Spector, M.A., M.B., B.Ch., M.R.C.P., A.R.C.
Report Series No. 11. 1951. London: H. M. Stationery Office. Pp. 16. 3s. 6d.

The incidence of disease among experimental animals offers opportunities for discovering the genetic basis of variation in disease resistance, opportunities which have been exploited by J. W. Gowen and others in the United States working with men, mice, guinea pigs and above all in poultry. Unfortunately in Britain disease is usually studied by medical and veterinary investigators who have not found it necessary to make themselves acquainted with genetic principles, methods, or discoveries.

Different breeds, and different inbred lines of an unnamed breed, of fowl raised together are found by Mr Spector to vary in the incidence of Fowl Nephritis from 3 to 52 per cent. "None of these differences", according to his Report, "are statistically significant". Hence it is concluded that "the results of the investigation do not support a congenital basis for the disease". The seventeenth century term *congenital*, so much cherished in medical usage, is intended presumably (in this case) to mean *genetic*. Until the numbers are published however we need not assume that the investigation was as unprofitable as it seems.

C. D. D.

MENTAL PRODIGIES. Fred Barlow. 1951. London: Hutchinson Sci. & Tech. Pub. Pp. 256. 12s. 6d.

A history of prodigies in calculation, music, language, and chess, the common factor in all of which is an aptitude for a specialised kind of memory. There are some notes on the heredity of the Bachs and Bernoullis and a great deal of evidence of genetic determination.