REVIEWS

GENETIC CONCEPTS AND NEOPLASIA. A collection of papers presented at the 23rd annual symposium on fundamental cancer research at the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute at Houston. Williams & Wilkins Co., Baltimore.

This volume reached me at the beginning of October 1970; it contains the proceedings of a symposium held at the beginning of March 1969; it costs U.S. \$17 (United Kingdom price is not given). The book is thus one of those *ad hoc* compilations which, with few exceptions, serve little purpose other than the financial gain of the publisher. This is not to say that there is nothing useful in it. Some of the short review articles are quite good, although in almost every case I can think of a better and more detailed review of the same material, sometimes by the same author. Some of the contributions describe original experiments; but they have almost all been published elsewhere, in some instances more than once. And in those areas with which I am most familiar, the experimental contributions are now old hat. Why do scientists agree to participate in symposia of this sort, where the presentation of a manuscript is required? Is Houston, Texas, so attractive a resort? I can think of situations where the rapid publication (say, within two months) of the proceedings of a meeting on a specific subject might serve a useful, if ephemeral, function; but where the subject matter is highly heterogeneous, and the publication time is eighteen months or more, the articles must be of an extremely high standard to justify the purchase of the book. With few exceptions, the articles in this book are pot-boilers produced for the occasion.

For those who are interested, the range of material covered includes: chromosomal abnormalities in tumours; the relationship between ionising radiation and tumour production; congenital malformations and cancer; the clonal origin of certain tumours; the effects of oncogenic viruses on cells; the effects of carcinogens on cells and nucleic acids; some ultra-structural studies; and three papers on somatic cell hybridisation, all containing material very largely published elsewhere. There is, however, a very interesting article by Beatrice Mintz on Neoplasia and Gene Activity in Allophenic Mice, which contains material I have not seen before.

I suggest that readers boycott this type of book, in the hope (perhaps forlorn) that publishers will eventually refrain from producing out-of-date symposia, and that the organisers of symposia will eventually stop asking participants for manuscripts.

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HUMAN POPULATION CYTOGENETICS. Edited by Patricia A. Jacobs, W. H. Price and Pamela Law. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1970.

This book contains the papers read at the fifth Symposium of the Pfizer Foundation, held in Edinburgh in 1969. In addition to the contents of an opening address by the Secretary of the Medical Research Council there are seventeen papers on such topics as karyotype descriptions in man, meiosis in females with normal and males with normal and abnormal karyotypes, population surveys and the automation of cytological analysis.