

REVIEWS

STADLER GENETICS SYMPOSIA, Vols. 4 and 5 (1972 and 1973). Edited by G. Kimber and G. P. Redei. Columbia, Missouri. Pp. 136 and 188 respectively. \$4.00 per volume.

The Stadler Symposia are establishing themselves as a really useful series. Inexpensively but decently produced in paperback, and with the contributors chosen for their leading involvement at growth points of genetics, these slim volumes are unusually good value. Though dedicated to the memory of L. J. Stadler and held in his own University, the Symposia are not limited to plant genetics but cover many areas of current interest. The paper which for many will be the high spot of these two volumes is that in volume 5 by L. Hood on genetics of immunoglobulins. This long but very clear and readable review focusses attention on the key issues and apparent paradoxes of the subject in the most helpful way, and is probably the best guide to immunogenetics currently available. Of the other contributions to these two volumes some of the most notable are (in volume 4) those of R. Wagner on mitochondria, Sears on genetic engineering in wheat, Sprague on maize breeding and (in volume 5) Carlson on the history of eugenics, Levine on mutations affecting membranes in *Chlamydomonas* and Hotchkiss on recombination mechanisms. The authors have all obviously put a considerable amount of thought and care into their written presentations (not always the case with Symposium manuscripts). Not all the contributions are equally weighty but none is trivial or uninteresting. These volumes well maintain the high standard set by the earlier numbers.

J. R. S. FINCHAM

Department of Genetics, University of Leeds

AN INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL GENETICS. Sixth edition. J. A. Fraser Roberts. Oxford University Press. Pp. xvi+310, illustrated. £3.50.

The appearance of a sixth edition is its own proof that a book fulfils a continuing need. On reading "An Introduction to Medical Genetics", the reason for its success becomes immediately apparent. Far from being put off by a subject which is often regarded as difficult, the reader is immediately made to realise how interesting human genetics really is. The fertilised ovum, unfolding its hereditary potentialities by a succession of cell divisions, develops into an individual with varying characteristics. The mechanisms underlying these processes are outlined so as to be intellectually stimulating but not requiring any undue effort of comprehension.

Unlike all too many textbooks, the present one has not grown in size as it has passed the milestones of successive editions. As a result it has lost neither its readability nor its compactness.

The author starts off from the premise that medical genetics is an applied subject and never allows himself to be carried away by any topic, however fashionable. Molecular genetics is dealt with in four pages, including an amusing diagram.

The tone is always reassuring. There is little room for doubts or dilemmas and the usefulness and success of the genetic counsellor's work is underlined