from the rest of us. Any group of persons who sit around the common room reading the *Mouse News Letter* and talking about mutants such as tubby and staggerer inevitably must display a superficial quaintness to the uninitiated. However it didn't take me long to realise that these people were serious.

One can't help comparing the communication and collaboration between mouse geneticists with the efforts of the human variety, to the detriment of the latter. First, the rules and guidelines for gene nomenclature for mouse mutants are logical and encourage mnemonic names (although I doubt whether one could get away with telling a human patient that he was a kinky-waltzer). The mouse nomenclature committee actually recognises upper and lower case letters for gene symbols, unlike its human counterpart which seems to be stuck in the era of punched computer cards. Second, the *Mouse News Letter* is a unique forum for publishing up to date information about mutant genes, linkage maps, and chromosome variants under one cover. Third, the documentation and availability of mutant stocks is much better organised and is run on an altruistic basis.

Genetic variants and strains of the laboratory mouse, the second edition of which is edited by Mary Lyon and Tony Searle, may be seen as an expanded compendium of the information available in *Mouse News Letter*. There is a clear and logical opening chapter by Mary Lyon on the rules and guidelines for gene nomenclature and this is followed by a 400 page catalogue of the 1500 known mutant genes and polymorphic loci, written by Margaret C Green. This section includes a brief description and a comprehensive reference list for each mutant. As the editors say in their preface, this is the most important section of the book. Some of the other catalogues appear regularly in the *Mouse News Letter* and would be expected to become out of date rapidly. These sections include the linkage map, data on linkage and synteny homologies, and the lists of retroviral and cancer related genes, DNA polymorphisms, and chromosome variants. On the other hand it is useful to have information about standard nomenclature and appearances of normal chromosomes, and details of inbred strains, under one cover.

This volume will be essential for mouse geneticists and de rigeur for human geneticists with any pretensions to taking a scientific approach to the unravelling of human disease and complex genetic mechanisms. It will be heavily used by its owners, and it is a pity that the paper used to print it seems to have been produced from recycled telephone directories; however, this in no way detracts from the quality of the contents.

ROBIN WINTER

Medical Genetics—An Illustrated Outline. Andrew Read. (Pp 136; $14·95.) Philadelphia: J B Lippincott. 1989.

This is a pocket sized book which contains a great deal of detailed and accurate information on the theoretical background to medical genetics. It is set out in an unusual way. Each of the eight chapters contains a glossary of words or short phrases relevant to the chapter heading. Each entry is concisely, accurately, and clearly written. Illustrations are present on every page, sometimes several to a page; they are in various shades of blue and are simple, clear, and informative. The chapter headings are: The human genome as DNA; The human genome as chromosomes; Genes, markers and the human genetic map; Chromosome abnormalities; Pedigree patterns in mendelian inheritance; Biochemical genetics; Non-mendelian conditions; Genes in populations.

The book can be used in two ways; firstly as a dictionary, by using the index (which is at the front of the book) and secondly as a revision guide by reading the contents of each chapter in the order written. The entries are not in alphabetical order but in the order which allows the reader, step by step, to build up a knowledge of the topic covered by the chapter.

It is a book which will prove useful to students learning the subject for the first time and to those already working in the field who want to revise aspects of the theoretical background to the subject.

This book can be recommended for being clear and concise, easy to use, packed with information, and also inexpensive.

D C SIGGERS

Correction

In the January 1990 issue of the Journal, in the Letter to the Editor on 'Oculocerebrocutaneous syndrome', we regret that the authors were listed in the wrong order. The order should have read: Raoul C M Hennekam, Frits A Beemer, Liesbeth M Bleeker-Wagemakers, Ben C J Hamel, Hanna W E Oorthuys.