Social and Genetic Influences on Life and Death.

The first of the four sessions at the Symposium organized by the Eugenics Society dealt appropriately enough with prenatal and perinatal influences, and the last session with senescence. The two intervening sessions were devoted to somatic and psychological illness. At the first session, chromosome anomalies, Rh haemolytic disease, and foetal and infant mortality were discussed, and there was also a discussion on some social aspects of family growth. At the second and third session there were statistical studies on trends in mortality in somatic disease and on the incidence of mental illness, and there were some more strictly clinical problems: coronary thrombosis, lung cancer, suicide, and alcoholism. A discussion on senescence in its economic, psychiatric, statistical, and genetic aspects concluded the symposium. The preponderance of medical contributors to this symposium makes this volume of particular interest to the medical reader in search of recognizable landmarks in social studies. This book is authoritative, concise, and covers a very wide field.

J. CHAYEN


In the United States of America, in the field of psychiatry at least, the word 'genetic' embraces etiology of all kinds. It is not used exclusively for hereditary causation. Accepting this comprehensive American usage, this book, edited by Ernest Harms, provides coverage of the genetic background of neurological and psychological disorders in childhood. A large proportion of the book is devoted to ideas about psychodynamic and psychosocial causation, and these are unlikely to be of central interest to geneticists concerned with heredity.

Hereditary factors are discussed here and there in this book. In a good taxonomic review of the causes of neurological disorders in childhood, George Gold discusses the heredity of specific conditions. Sections that may be of more peripheral interest to the geneticist are those on somatotyping and constitutional analysis by Ashton Tenney and Nathan Kline, and by Reinhardt Lempp.

This book is a symposium of essays that are likely to be of more interest and value to those working in the field of child psychiatry than those whose primary interest is genetics.

VALERIE COWIE


Many of the contributions deal with chromosomal anomalies, and there is a general review of 70 pages on autosomal chromosomal anomalies in ophthalmology by François of Ghent. There are relatively few papers of strictly clinical significance and these are mostly ophthalmological. There is a useful study by de Morsier on Jean Antoine Colladon as a precursor of Mendel.

ARNOLD SORSBY