

This table seems to indicate that the lack of data noticeable in the national official statistics has its origin at the registration offices of the "Comuni". Therefore two clerks ("officiali dello stato civile"), who have been in charge for a very long period of time, were questioned on the subject of the registration of consanguineous marriages. The main points of their answers were: 1) No note about consanguinity is to be written in the register of marriages. 2) Notes about consanguinity should be written in the register of publications of marriages, since the partners must subscribe that no impediment exists against their marriage. However, in practice, an inquiry about their consanguinity is easily omitted, or the doubts are solved in the negative sense. 3) Since 1929 the only source of news about consanguinity of marriages, existing in the archives of the "Comuni" or of the tribunals, is the parish priest's letter, through which the civil Authorities are asked to make the publication of a future marriage. In this letter the degree of consanguinity of the partners, and the dispensation obtained should be expressly mentioned.

It is therefore evident that the data furnished by the official statistics on consanguinity depend, on the one hand, on the *bona fides* of the partners and, on the other, on the *bona voluntas* of the officials. I think that the *bona voluntas* of the officials in the past was and still is, frequently handicapped. It is sufficient to read the book "Le rilevazioni statistiche in Italia dal 1861 al 1956" (Annali di Statistica, 86, serie VIII, vol. 6, 1957), edited by the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, to get an idea of the difficulties met with until recent years to gather data – of still greater importance than consanguinity of marriages – in some uniform way from the "Comuni".

In view of the above observations, and bearing in mind the better administrative conditions of northern Italy, it is quite justifiable to doubt all the official data on consanguineous marriages so far published for the other regions of Italy.

The only conclusion remains that *in the official Italian statistics there are not only "possible uncertainties", as Dr. Alström says, but real deficiencies which, surely, lead to biased estimates and to misleading inferences.* You might think that official Italian statistics can give an idea of the trend in the variation of the frequencies of consanguineous marriages in the various regions of Italy: it is an opinion upon which I cannot agree. In any event *the official Italian statistics so far published on consanguineous marriages are absolutely unsuitable for solving problems of population genetics*, for example the determination of inbreeding coefficients and the size of the isolates.

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J. Bauer: Der kranke Mensch als biologische Einheit. George Thieme, Stuttgart 1958 VIII + 134 S. DM 16.80.

E. Kretschmer: Hysterie, Reflex und Instinkt. Georg Thieme, Stuttgart 1958. VI + 148 S. DM 9.80.

The names of *Julius Bauer* and *Ernst Kretschmer* are both intimately connected with the concept of constitution and thus with human genetics. The book by Bauer, which is a translation of the original edition "The Person Behind the Disease", gives a broad

treatment of a number of medico-genetic subjects; Kretschmer's book, on the other hand, which is an extension of his standard work on hysteria, is only indirectly of interest to human geneticists.

N. Juel-Nielsen, Copenhagen

H. Kalb: Zur Kenntnis des Mongolismus. Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie der Schwachsinnformen. Acta Anthropologica, Heft 1, Heilkunst-Verlag, München 1957. 66 Seiten, DM 5.50.

G. Ziegelmayr: Über die Konstitution der Rothhaarigen. Acta Anthropologica, Heft 2, Heilkunst-Verlag, München 1958. 104 Seiten, 25 Abbildungen, 48 Tabellen, 17 Bildtafeln, DM 14.—.

The University Institute of Anthropology in Munich has recently commenced the publication of a new series of papers entitled Acta Anthropologica. The present booklets will shortly be followed by a number of papers on anthropological and related subjects.

The first issue, on Mongolism, is mainly concerned with the etiological problems but does not bring very much new material and only a superficial treatment of the literature. Many recent important works dealing with the central problems in a much more satisfactory way are not mentioned, e.g. the monograph by Øster (1944) and the twin study by Allen and Kallmann (1956).

The second booklet, on the constitution of the red-haired individuals, includes a detailed anthropological study of 174 unrelated persons presenting strikingly red hair. The object is to elucidate the distinctive features of these individuals in order to find out whether they form a special constitutional group. A comprehensive range of traits have been examined, e.g. the pigmentation in general, the structural details of the eye, the dermatoglyphics and the serological characters, and the findings have been compared with a control group. Some significant differences appear, but the author stresses that a complete delimitation of this group and all its characteristics is not possible yet. The interesting question of the qualitative and quantitative morbidity in this group is only mentioned, so further studies are certainly wanted. A comprehensive list of references is included.

Mogens Hauge, Copenhagen

Blood Groups. Separatum "British Medical Bulletin" Vol. 15, No. 2, 1959. Medical Department, The British Council, London. 20 shillings.

The attention of geneticists should be drawn to this excellent survey published recently. It gives an up to date picture, prepared by experts, of the general development and the present state within this vast field and, thus, offers a very valuable help to all non-specialists who cannot follow the rapid progress of this branch of biology in detail. The subjects covered include the inheritance of the blood groups, the biochemistry of the human blood group substances and their distribution in the tissues, the relation between blood groups and disease, blood groups and anthropology, blood groups and natural selection as well as blood groups and linkage. The factors determining the clinical importance of blood group antibodies and the haemolytic disease of the newborn are discussed. The increasingly important antiglobulin reaction and its many applications are reviewed. Finally, papers on the relation between human and animal blood groups as well as on haemagglutinins in seeds are included. As is fully evident from this summary the volume is indispensable to human geneticists because blood groups have become an essential remedy of research in genetics. The authors and editors should be complimented on the fine way in which they have been able to concentrate a wealth of valuable information.

Mogens Hauge, Copenhagen

Speech-Disorders. Origin – Semeology – Genetics. Reports prepared for the 11th Congress of Logopedics and Phoniatrics in London, August 17–22, 1959. Separatum "Folia Phoniatrica" Vol. 11, No. 1–3, 1959. S. Karger, Basel, 166 p., 13 fig. sFr. 20.—

The main lectures given at the 11th International Congress of Logopedics and Phoniatrics have been published under the common title of "Speech-Disorders". The volume contains three papers: 1. On the inheritance of voice and language by R. Luchsinger, Zürich; 2. On the defects of articulation, by M.E. Morley, Newcastle, and 3. On the physiology and pathology of the palate, by L. Croatto and C. Croatto-Martinoli.

These surveys are of great value to all students of speech and its disorders. To geneticists, the first paper is probably the most interesting. It gives a review of the more important, though limited genetic investigations, primarily based on twins, which have been carried out concerning the development of voice and language and its disturbances, and a valuable list of references is included. As in other medical fields the constantly improved and more extensive methods of examination seem to facilitate the delimitation of the basic components of speech and of the pathological entities within the large and heterogeneous group of speech-disorders, and this gives new possibilities of genetic analyses which are certainly still needed to a great extent. *Mogens Hauge, Copenhagen*

O. von Verschuer: Genetik des Menschen. Urban & Schwarzenberg, München/Berlin. XI + 427 S., 204 Abb. DM 48.—

The author's obvious intent is to follow in the footsteps of Baur-Fischer-Lenz and create a German text and reference book in human genetics of a reasonable size which can offer easily available orientation concerning the position of human genetics today. This has been very successful although the task has become considerably more difficult following the developments in biochemical genetics and serology within recent decades which have increased the range of human genetics and rendered it practically impossible for a single individual to be conversant with the entire subject. Verschuer's book lives fully up to the German tradition of pedagogical and logical presentation of the subject and, in this manner, it will undoubtedly find favour as a textbook in the medical schools in Germany and the neighbouring countries. By means of the numerous and well classified references to the literature, the book will offer good support as a handbook for research workers in genetics and, not least, for those interested in eugenics as very great stress is laid on the special problems associated with the evaluation of the hereditary prognosis in various diseases and defective states. The presentation of the references to the literature is, both from the scientific point of view and in the printing, somewhat obscure. References to German «Zusammenstellungen», frequently made by authors who have only been concerned with the literature on the subject involved, are too frequent instead of direct references to the original research works. Finally, the author's fixation to the classical, somewhat philosophical, German medicine is rather too massive, e.g. when mentioning the clinical picture of the lymphatic exudative diathesis he describes a diathesis as «eine syntropische, aber nicht obligate, sondern fakultative Verknüpfung der koordinierten Teilbereitschaften», a definition which would, in fact, be grasped only with difficulty, in any case by doctors trained in Anglo-Saxon countries. *Bent Harvald, Copenhagen*