

Preface to the Second Edition

Early obsolescence of the first edition and drift into obesity of later, updated editions appear to be generic traits of genetics texts. For instance, the first edition of the very prototype of the genre, W. Johannsen's *Elemente der exakten Erblchkeitslehre*, in which the word *gene* made its debut, was out of date and out of print within two years of its publication in 1909. By 1913 Johannsen had brought out a second edition, in which the original 515 pages had grown to 723 pages. Half a century later, J. D. Watson's *Molecular Biology of the Gene*, whose first edition in 1965 consisted of 494 pages, had grown to 739 pages by its third edition in 1976. So also has *this* genetics text not managed to escape the common destiny of its kind: seven years after its first appearance we now present an overdue, updated, and fattened second edition.

The narrative style of this text turned out to present special difficulties for the project of updating it in the light of recent advances in understanding the function of the hereditary substance. Because of the initial conception of the corpus of molecular genetics as a story, major alterations—not to speak of deletions—seemed to threaten the literary integrity of the text. Obviously, Margaret Mitchell could not very well have revised *Gone with the Wind* in the light of later insights into the conditions of antebellum Southern plantation society and compensated for an expanded, updated rendition of the O'Hara household by dropping the Atlanta-in-flames episode. Hence we had to treat the material to be presented in this second edition mainly as a sequel to rather than as a revision of the narrative begun in the first edition. In any case, this updated story is still based on the Berkeley undergraduate molecular genetics course, whose original stewardship was relinquished by G. S. Stent at the time of publication of the first edition and of which R. Calendar has taken charge in recent years.

The bibliographies of pertinent literature provided at the end of each chapter have been extensively revised, particularly those providing guidance to specialized texts, monographs, and reviews. Moreover, pertinent references have been added to a pedagogically most useful book, namely, *Biochemistry: A Problems Approach* by W. B. Wood, J. H. Wilson, R. M. Benbow, and L. E. Hood (W. A. Benjamin, Menlo Park, Cal., 1974). This book is abbreviated as WOOD in the bibliographies.

We are indebted to the many colleagues who have drawn our attention to errors and deficiencies in the first edition and offered valuable suggestions for improvements, particularly F. W. Stahl and W. D. Stansfield. We thank Laura Davis and Lawrence Honig for their careful scrutiny of the manuscript. Finally, this second edition, like the first edition, has benefited greatly from Charles Yanofsky's critical reading of the entire text and from Margery Hoogs' excellent editorial assistance.

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