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SHORT REVIEWS

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

A Text-Book of Agriculture

Designed for use in East African Schools. By J. G. Brash. Pp. xv+311. (London: The Sheldon Press, 1939.) 4s. 6d.

THE writing of a text-book of agriculture in English for use by a body of students whose knowledge of English is very meagre is surely a most difficult task. This is evidently realized by the author of the present book, for he includes a glossary not only of technical terms but also of words and expressions commonly in use in ordinary English. But if the task of preparing such a text-book must be faced, we have seen no attempt which attains a greater measure of success than that now under consideration. Apart from the language difficulty in the present case, there is another, which is referred to in the author's foreword, namely, that the pupils for whom it is designed look upon the study of agriculture in the schools as a disagreeable necessity, for most of them join the higher schools chiefly for the purpose of gaining a higher social status by getting remunerative employment on the completion of their school courses, and hence are in most cases only interested in those subjects which are required for such paid positions as are available to them.

Yet, in a country of which the whole economic future depends on agricultural progress, the latter must chiefly come through the younger generation who are now in the schools. It would seem, therefore, that if these young people are really to be weaned from the desire for mere clerical positions to a genuine devotion to the improvement of agriculture, there must be text-books which are of exceptional interest, and also inspiring teachers of the subject in the schools. Without the latter, the text-book will do little: with them, it would not be easy to prepare a better book than that under review.

In it, the principles of agriculture as applied to East African conditions are admirably presented, with emphasis on those matters which have proved to be the most important for the development of the country. Special features are the very lucid

account of erosion and the methods of combating it, and a useful chapter on the co-operative organization of agriculture as it can be developed in East Africa.

The book can be highly recommended. It does almost all that a text-book can do in connexion with agricultural teaching in East Africa, but neither it nor any other text-book can direct interest and attention back to agriculture in the absence of an inspiring teacher. If the latter is there, then the book will be found of great value. H. H. M.

Timber

Its Properties, Pests and Preservation. By Dr. F. Y. Henderson. Pp. 186+19 plates. (London: Crosby Lockwood and Son, Ltd., 1939.) 9s. 6d. net.

NUMEROUS technical publications have been issued which deal separately with different aspects of timber technology, but none has appeared in Great Britain in which a general elementary account of timber in non-technical language is given. The book under notice, written primarily for students of engineering and building science, fills this gap. The text covers briefly the whole general field of timber technology as indicated under its sub-titles, and is profusely illustrated with line drawings and photographs, the majority of which are original. The style is refreshingly simple and straightforward, thus bearing the hall-mark of an author who not only knows his subject, but also has the gift of being able to put himself into the position of the student and general reader who is taking up the subject for the first time.

This book should prove of great value not only to engineering and building students, but also to the general public, all of whom are users of timber. In war-time it is important that the most economical use be made of our timber resources, and it is only through knowledge of its properties that it can be used most profitably. It is unfortunate that the price may put this book out of reach of many, but this is doubtless due to the general rise in cost of production, but to those who can afford it the nine shillings and sixpence should prove an excellent investment. K. Sr. G. C.