Some thinkers, however, find such a view inadequate to account for the facts, and therefore postulate in addition some, to us unknown, purpose in the universe. Our developing knowledge of other peoples has replaced many illusions as to natural differences by the recognition of likenesses as well, and confirms the importance of the social environment. It is not unlikely that man's mental and moral development depends in part upon the relation between his inheritance and the physical and social environment in which he grows up. Dr. Myers analyses several modern environmental conditions and concludes that changes have occurred which justify a belief in human improvability; these improvements do not, however, appear to come from the innate improvability of a race but from the improvement in the social heritage. The paper is provocative and stimulating, and in view of Dr. Myers's intimate knowledge of many aspects of modern civilisation, it is worthy of very serious consideration. It is all the more important at the present time, when so much pessimism is shown in the interpretation of the changes which our environment is experiencing.

British Poisonous and Edible Plants

EXCEPTING works on poisonous plants from the agricultural and medical points of view, there is very little printed information available to the lay reader. Fortunately, most British poisonous plants are rare; but the most dangerous are those with an attractive and luscious appearance. Perhaps that is why, despite their scarcity, such plants are the cause of illness and even death to unwary ramblers, campers, and school children every year. The pamphlet recently published as a reprint from *School Nature Study* therefore comes as a timely warning, not only to the country child and the town child in the country, for whom it is written, but also to adults who take an active part in country life. The pamphlet, "British Poisonous and Edible Plants", written by Miss Hilda F. Rendle, after a few introductory remarks, gives a list of edible plants found growing wild. These are divided into black fruits, scarlet fruits, seeds and nuts, flowers, leaves, roots, and fungi. The second part deals with the poisonous plants, giving not only the well-known plants such as laurel, bryony, deadly nightshade, etc., but also some of the less familiar types such as the spindle with its attractive pink fruit and orange seeds, potato 'apples', and acorns. A few of these are illustrated. It is a pity that the fungi were not given more space. Only the common mushroom (*Psallista*) is described, with the concluding remark that "all other fungi should be avoided". In the present day of extended country activities, this pamphlet should be welcomed by all school teachers, boy scouts troops, country rambling organisations, etc. Copies at 2½*d*. each or two shillings per dozen can be obtained from Mr. E. G. Clarke, 7 Stanley Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex.

Acquisitions at the Natural History Museum

THE Department of Botany, British Museum, has received 320 plants collected by Mr. H. St. J. B. Philby, on his recent Arabian journey and presented by the King of Hejaz and Najd. The plants are of interest botanically as being from an area previously unexplored. It has to be remembered that, from an economic point of view, plants are of the greatest importance in deserts, and according to Mr. Philby the Arabs know them so well as camel food or otherwise that they are able to judge the date of the last rains from their presence or absence. The Arab name is attached to each plant. Acquisitions of the Department of Minerals include meteorites collected by Mr. Philby, a piece from the 15-ton mass of meteoric iron discovered in 1930 near Mbosi in Tanganyika Territory, a piece of a meteoric stone which fell recently near Kirkuk, Iraq, and a specimen of pitchblende from the recently discovered occurrence on the Great Bear Lake, North-West Territory, Canada. Dr. Robert Broom has presented to the Geological Department a small series of South African fossil reptiles, several of which are the types of genera and species recently established by the donor. They belong principally to Therocephalian and Dicynodont genera, and range from Permian to Trias in age. Through the generosity of Rear-Admiral H. Lynes, Mr. Jack Vincent has been collecting for the Museum in Portuguese East Africa, the birds of which are very little known; already two consignments have been received. A collection of more than a thousand birds from Yunnan obtained by the late Mr. G. Forrest, the well-known plant collector, has been presented by the Godman Exploration Fund, while Dr. P. A. Buxton has presented a collection of some 750 birds made by him during the War in Iraq and Persia.

Publications of the Institut Henri Poincaré

THE completed first volume of the *Annales de l'Institut Henri Poincaré* (Paris: Institut Henri Poincaré; Les Presses Universitaires de France) contains a highly interesting set of papers on theoretical physics and its mathematical borderland, of varying degrees of difficulty, several of which have been referred to in our columns on their appearance. The contributions verging on the purely mathematical include two on integral equations, by Kostitzin and Carleman, one by Brillouin, on a hyperbolic equation, and two, by Lévy and Polya, on the calculus of probabilities. Relativity is represented by Einstein and de Donder, and quantum theory by Darwin, Fermi, Born, and Dirac. The other papers are by Brillouin, on fusion, and by L. Bloch, on band spectra. It will be evident that the list of authors is one of unusual authority, a feature continued in the first numbers of the second volume by the inclusion of Sommerfeld and Cabrera. Their respective papers also give in short the aim of all, which appears to be to comment on current problems, or to collect and criticise otherwise scattered work. The papers are based on lectures delivered under the auspices of the Institut Henri Poincaré, and the only important change to be desired is that less time should be allowed to elapse between the delivery of the lecture and the time when it appears in print.

Population of England and Wales

THE "Text" (final) volume of the Registrar-General's Statistical Review, England and Wales, 1930, has been published (H.M. Stationery Office, 2*s*. 6*d*.