

author contemplates the permanency of the East London environment, he has no more right to describe most of his subjects as socially inadequate because they failed there, than to describe a Jersey cow as agriculturally inadequate because she fails on the South African veldt. Unfortunately, such considerations will not occur to all the readers of this book.

The statement on pp. 19-20 that the socially inadequate are endowed at the expense of the self-supporting community could be used for any sort of propaganda, for example, against capitalism or the drink trade. It is here applied to the chronic pauper, with the further suggestion that the inadequacy is congenital. This is as legitimate as most other political propaganda, but it seems very unfortunate that it should be carried out with funds supplied by such bodies as the Medical Research Council and the Royal Society. Moreover, the obvious political bias displayed is likely to have the opposite effect to that intended. Some members of the 'social problem group' almost certainly bear genes which would lower their efficiency in any environment, and thus present a real problem for the eugenicist. Readers who disagree with Mr. Lidbetter's opinions on politics and economics will be likely to overlook this fact.

Undoubtedly many readers will disagree with the reviewer, and regard this work as an important contribution to human biology. It is unquestionably a storehouse of valuable facts, but they would have been more impressive to the reviewer had the political opinions of their collector been less obvious. Is it too late to hope that, in the promised second volume of this work, a serious attempt will be made to assess the relative importance of nature and nurture in determining the characteristics of the men and women here described?

J. B. S. H.

### The Human Outlook in Botany

*Everyday Botany*. By L. J. F. Brimble. Pp. viii+589. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1934.) 7s. 6d.

THERE is no doubt that the study of botany is less commonly regarded as of general importance than is that of chemistry and physics, which seem to touch more closely our everyday life with their direct bearings on the chemical industries, on electricity, telephony, wireless and so on. Yet a knowledge of plant life is essential to the development of agriculture, the oldest and most widespread of human occupations, and those countless individuals who cultivate allotments or seek to embellish their surroundings by trim and attractive gardens would be more successful in their pursuits if they had some understanding of the needs

of the plants they grow. Unfortunately, their education in this direction has usually been neglected.

It is to be regretted that even in these days, when the importance of science in our national life is beginning to meet with more recognition, the biological sciences are still absent from the curriculum of many boys' schools. Perhaps the ordinary textbooks of botany have not convinced the headmasters of the human interest and the universal importance of the subject. Mr. Brimble has endeavoured to meet this defect in his "Everyday Botany" by including in an elementary book dealing with plant life many features which indicate the utility to man of many important plants and plant products. By emphasising the human side of botany and maintaining a wide outlook on the important practical applications of a study of plants, the author fully justifies the publication of a new textbook, which it is to be hoped will meet with a warm welcome.

It is natural and fitting that the treatment of the subject matter should have a physiological bias, for it is the life of the plant which is of prime importance in considering its cultivation. But a knowledge of its structure is essential too, for structure and function of the various organs go hand in hand. Both aspects are adequately dealt with and the text is clear and readable, continually lightened for the general reader, for whom the book is primarily written, by reference to interesting facts which should be of common knowledge, but unfortunately are not. The treatment remains, however, always scientific, and the scope of the book is sufficiently comprehensive to serve as an adequate preparation for the various School Certificate and Matriculation examinations. One of the features which will attract both pupils and teachers is the wealth of illustrations, a large number being reproductions of excellent drawings by the author.

Having dealt with the plant as a whole, Mr. Brimble devotes a special chapter to the plant and its surroundings, an attractive introduction to the modern branch of botany known as ecology. This is followed by a chapter on evolution and plant-breeding, which fittingly indicates one of the paths of future progress in agriculture and horticulture. In this chapter, as indeed throughout the book, the author indicates by reference to former and present investigators the course of the development of botanical science, and manages to convey to the mind of the reader that botany is a progressive science and that it has its part to play in the progress of human affairs. In this as in other ways the book is stimulating in its effect upon the reader, and it will without doubt be found most useful to all who wish to acquire a knowledge of plant life.