

of body temperature before the onset of the heat of summer.

The effects of fasts, feasts and religious ceremonies seem to have a considerable influence on the incidence of conceptions, especially among highly superstitious peoples such as existed in pre-War Russia. Unfortunately, no post-Revolution figures are available for comparative purposes. A great deal more information is needed on the season of marriage, and the month after marriage when the first child is born, together with the economic circumstances underlying such seasonal variations as do occur, before the hypotheses in this book can be established.

The discussion of the season of birth of abnormal types such as psychotics and mental defectives is intermingled with much unusual and unconventional theory. We read on p. 396 that "the most important cause of mental deficiency is environmental conditions which act upon the child during pregnancy, at birth, and onward throughout life". There may, of course, be some truth in this statement; but if it is untrue, then this section of the work is largely invalidated.

As the book proceeds, more weight is placed on the effect of atmospheric temperature on the seasonal distribution of births and less on other factors such as diet. On p. 417 we read that "Temperature appears to be the main factor". Most of the work done on the relationship between diet and fertility has been entirely neglected. There may possibly be some powerful and direct relationship between atmospheric temperature and fertility, but on the other hand there may not.

It is always a difficult task to make a critical estimate of the value of a book of this size. The author tells us that the work has taken two years, but in view of the immensity of the problems studied, which are biological, psychological and sociological, it would be unfair to expect more than a general survey of the field and a set of likely hypotheses worthy of investigation. The spirit of enthusiasm which pervades this work should do much towards stimulating further research into this interesting and unexplored field.

R. M. W. T.

Study of the Bantu

Bantu Beliefs and Magic :

with particular reference to the Kikuyu and Kamba Tribes of Kenya Colony; together with some Reflections on East Africa after the War. By C. W. Hobley. Pp. iii + 368 + 11 plates. (London: H. F. and G. Witherby, Ltd., 1938.) 15s. net.

MR. HOBLEY'S study of Bantu beliefs and magic, dealing more specifically with the Kikuyu and Kamba peoples of Kenya, was first published in 1922. It was at once recognized as work of the first order, both as a study of these African peoples, and as a contribution to the general stock of anthropological material, most notably perhaps in its observation and interpretation of the place of the concept of *thahu*, the 'curse', as an element in their life and thought. The importance of this concept was duly stressed by Sir James Frazer in his preface to the original edition. The book has long been out of print. A new edition is welcome, not only because it makes accessible once more a book essential for the student, but also because much water has passed under the bridge since its original appearance. Mr. Hobley can now compare present-day conditions with his diagnosis of the native situation in the immediate post-War years.

The comparison redounds to the credit of Mr.

Hobley's understanding of the people and the sanity of his judgment. He is no doctrinaire; he gauges the needs of the moment with the eye of an administrator. Although it is now many years since he retired, he has kept closely in touch with the trend of events, while his detachment from controversial strife is obvious.

Mr. Hobley shows a ready appreciation of the value of the work of the native councils; but in his view the crux of future development is education, with finance as a stumbling block. Missionary education, though economical, is deprecated as for the most part in the hands of those who are untrained. At the same time he does not agree with the views of Lord De La Warr's Commission on the necessity for developing a system of higher education. Mr. Hobley would rather see efforts concentrate on secondary education. He holds that the young African is not so intelligent as the average European, though malnutrition may be in part responsible. The best solution of Africa's problem he can find is co-operation. It may be that his wisest advice is "Trust the settler"; but by 'Young Africa' he is not as yet greatly impressed.

However much any reader may disagree with Mr. Hobley on specific points, he will have to admit that, as a whole, his survey is judicial in its attitude and in its outlook sane.