

THE CHARM OF FLOWERS

Flowers in Britain

Wild, Ornamental and Economic, and some Relatives in Other Lands. By L. J. F. Brimble. Pp. x+394+18 plates. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1944.) 12s. 6d. net.

ONCE in a while a book appears which impresses the reader from the moment he first handles it. For a long time he has been conscious of a gap in contemporary literature that cries out to be filled; eventually a book appears, and the reader is immediately aware that this is the book for which he has been waiting. "Flowers in Britain" is unquestionably such a book. It was conceived with vision and has been nurtured with the assurance that such a book was badly needed.

Mr. Brimble has prepared it for "anyone who is interested in or wants to know something about flowering plants". These can be broadly divided into two groups. They are the non-botanists, who are interested in flowers for their appearance as much as anything else, and the botanists, who, while equally appreciative of the beauty of flowers, are more concerned with the formal aspects of their study. This book has something to offer to both groups, as well as to the intermediates who could not be classified as belonging to either one or the other.

British people have long had the reputation of being interested in their countryside. We have had striking proof of this during the War by the formation of natural history and field survey clubs in semi-static units of the Armed Forces, both at home and overseas. One such club in the Middle East has achieved considerable prominence, while, in Great Britain, the Royal Society has sponsored a promising movement in the Anti-Aircraft Command called the Nature Observation Scheme. The transfer of town-dwellers to rural areas, as well as the invasion of Great Britain by men from abroad who have made us more aware of the beauty of our own surroundings, has also served to deepen the regard for wild life. (Not many years ago, M. Herriot, the distinguished French statesman, was a guest in Oxford. He was asked by H. A. L. Fisher what had struck him most on his first visit to England. "Two things," he replied, "first your rabbits and second your flowers.") Some of these people have particular interest in flowering plants, and to them this book would be a rich store of delight.

What has Mr. Brimble to offer here to the botanist? In the preface he writes: "One frequently finds that academic botanists, though thoroughly well-versed in the classification, structure, function, and so forth of the British native flora, are unfamiliar with garden flowers, many of which are really exotics. It is sometimes a matter of wonder to a non-botanist that many academic botanists, even those who have taken a university degree in the subject, know much less about the flowers of our gardens than the ordinary gardener". There is little need to labour his point, and many botanists will be grateful for the section on ornamental plants which appears under each family.

The order of the book can be briefly stated. There is a short introduction on the structure and classification of flowering plants, and then a series of chapters on the natural families, arranged, more or less, in evolutionary sequence. Each family is treated under the headings of plants indigenous to Great Britain, orna-

mental plants, and economic plants. The text is reinforced by more than thirty line drawings—all of them prepared by the author—and 160 photographs, and 18 coloured plates. The plates were painted by eminent floral artists; they are a tribute to their calling and to that of the printers who have prepared the plates for this work. Finally, the author has not forgotten the time-honoured part played by flowers in literature, and the book abounds with quotations as apt as they are entrancing.

In reading this well-merited praise, however, it must not be imagined that the book is without fault. Presumably, in trying to make the matter as clear as possible for the non-professional, Mr. Brimble has, on several occasions, fallen into the habit of 'writing down' to his reader. This has resulted in the production of some loose and grammatically unacceptable phrasing which might have been eliminated by severer proof-checking. There are a few factual errors, while, in some cases, the author has attributed to plants purpose and design. Further, some of the black-and-white photographs are not sufficiently clearly printed to illustrate the point under consideration.

Yet the standard of the book makes these criticisms seem almost churlish or carping. It is a magnificent production which should add considerably to the author's growing reputation as a writer of general biological works. When the next edition is printed, it is to be hoped that the supply position will have so much improved that the paper on which the text is printed becomes worthy of the matter.

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FOOD SCIENCE

The Chemistry and Technology of Food and Food Products

Prepared by a Group of Specialists under the editorship of Dr. Morris B. Jacobs. Vol. 1. Pp. xvi+952. (New York: Interscience Publishers, Inc., 1944.) 10.50 dollars.

DR. MORRIS B. JACOBS, with the aid of forty-one expert collaborators, has set out to write a text-book in two volumes covering the whole field of food science and technology—a difficult if not an impossible task. Volume 1 is in two parts and contains 900 pages of subject-matter. Part 1 occupies 390 pages and is concerned with fundamentals—the physical chemistry of foods, the carbohydrates, lipoids, amino-acids and proteins, enzymes, vitamins and minerals, colouring matters, food spoilage and poisoning. All the sections are well written and largely up to date, and no doubt there are few research workers who would not profit by reading them. At the same time, many will feel that it is rather an unnecessarily heavy and rich hors-d'œuvre for the massive courses that follow.

Part 2, on foods, covers milk and dairy products, meats, fish, poultry and eggs, edible oils and fats, cereals, baking, fruits and vegetables, carbohydrates, confectionery and cocoa products, flavours, spices and condiments, coffee and tea. Each of these commodities is treated by an expert in the particular field, some of them of international renown. At the same time they are all very busy people, and one cannot help feeling that they would have written even better articles after the War when the demands on their time will be reduced.

In evaluating Volume 1 it is essential to remember