

The general pattern of the book may be seen from the sectional headings into which it is divided. To help the beginner there is an introductory section containing a short review of the plant kingdom together with chapters describing the morphology, physiology, ecology and systematic classification of plants. Brimble then begins his pageant of Nature, with the calendar as guide, by considering deciduous trees in winter. In February, he examines the stirrings in woods and copses, hedges and banks and open spaces, and, in March, adds to his studies an investigation into the plant life of marshes and river banks. So his panorama unfolds. In April, he examines trees and shrubs, woods and hedgerows, fields, waste places and heaths, weeds, old walls, marshes, river banks and coastal areas. All these are re-examined in May, while the author also looks at thickets, meadows, cultivated land, mountains and moorlands, damp meadows, ditches and streams.

The profusion of June is described under the chapter-headings of trees, woods and thickets, the canopy of hedges, undergrowth of hedges, field and meadow grasses, fields, meadows and pastures, waysides and waste places, more weeds, mountains, moorland and heath, walls, moisture-loving plants, semi-aquatics and aquatics and coastal areas. July is similarly considered; but, while in August opportunities for study grow less, there are still woods, fields and meadows, more weeds, waste places, heaths, wet places and coastal areas to be investigated. The remaining months of the year are grouped together and considered under the headings of autumn flowers, seed-time and harvest, autumn tints and leaf-fall, and evergreens, the drama concluding appropriately with the enchanting story of Christmas customs and festivals from the botanist's point of view. It is a tribute to the way in which this book has been arranged that, despite the straightforward calendar arrangement, the reader may begin to read at the current season of the year and at once take up the theme. Here the author has given considerable help by providing an adequate series of cross-references both as part of the text and at the end of each chapter.

Besides its arrangement the manner in which the text has been written itself adds enchantment to the book. Descriptions of plants are given in precise, short-syllabled words to which no botanist would take exception. The force of these descriptions is strengthened by the generous use of quotations in prose and poetry from literature and folk-lore which themselves add to the charm of the book. Nor does the author fail to make use of the economic significance of plants to enliven his text, while the introduction of relevant anecdotal passages not only increases the human interest of the book but also shows that its contents have been lived as well as learned.

The other outstanding feature of this remarkable book is the range of illustrations. These are prodigal in number, rich in quality and dominated by twenty-five specially commissioned colour-plates the originals of which were executed in tempera by Mr. W. Reeves. Harmonizing with these are many characteristic line-drawings prepared by the author himself, while there are also several hundred photographs which have been taken by specialist photographers who are themselves well known as naturalists. Unfortunately, some of these have not reproduced well and form, perhaps, the only blemish in this book.

That the book should have the maximum utility is shown by the inclusion of two indexes, one con-

cerned only with botanical names and one with topics of general and particular interest. The whole book is, indeed, a tribute to the perspicacity, acumen and industry of the author, and no doubt will grace our shelves for many years. Brimble's reward will be the reader's gratitude for this classic work.

T. H. HAWKINS

## RURAL LIFE AND WORK

### Family Farm Policy

Proceedings of a Conference on Family Farm Policy, attended by participants from the British Commonwealth, Northern Europe, Central Europe, Latin America, and the United States, held at the University of Chicago, February 15-20, 1946. Edited by Joseph Ackerman and Marshall Harris. Pp. xxii+518. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; London: Cambridge University Press, 1948.) 22s. 6d. net.

THERE assembled in 1946 at the University of Chicago, by invitation of the Farm Foundation, a gathering of seventy-six persons of diverse interests connected with the land to discuss problems of tenure, especially in their relation to the family farm. This volume is the report of that conference. It has an international flavour, some three-fifths of it consisting of authoritative papers on the land tenure systems of a dozen different countries; but it is on the United States that attention is focused, not surprisingly, seeing that ninety per cent of those present were from that country.

They accepted, a little too readily perhaps, the popular view that the family farm is the best form of agricultural organisation for providing the farmer with a satisfying life—whether it is the best also for feeding the world did not appear—and this conclusion was reached in spite of the serious disadvantages under which many family farms were seen to labour and with little or no examination of other important types of farm. The usual preference in the United States for ownership as against tenancy was re-affirmed; but the drawbacks of tenancy in that country were admitted to be due, at least in part, to a lack of statutory provisions such as exist in some other countries for safeguarding the relative positions of landlord and tenant. There is no simple answer to the old question whether the proud owner of a heavily mortgaged holding is really better off than a tenant free of debt, though the question never seems so insistent after a few years of high prices and reduced indebtedness.

Other problems which received attention were: land settlement, which tends to become prominent after a war, taxation, excessive subdivision of small properties on one hand and limitations on the size of large holdings on the other; and the needs of the landless worker who, in the United States, seems to enjoy no legal standards for his wages, hours of work, compensation for injury, or social security.

The value of this report—and it is considerable—lies in its bringing many complex problems into view, rather than in attempting to solve them. It takes its place as a significant contribution to questions of land tenure which vex much of the world to-day, and which, unfortunately, respond less to scientific and economic reasoning than to political prejudice.

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