

BOOK NOTICES

The Biology of Man

Two facts have become increasingly apparent to teachers of college biology in recent years; first, many modern college students are better equipped in biological courses upon entering college than were students in former days, and second, college students show far greater interest in the biology of human beings than in that of lower organisms. These facts lead to important problems for the college teacher. He must see that the introductory college course reaches a higher level than that of the high school, so as not to dull the students' interest by needless repetition. He must fit into the college course more complex and advanced material, and at the same time keep or even increase the interest of the student.

Dr. Baitsell has taken a noteworthy step in this direction by preparing an excellent introduction to biology, built around the organization and activities of human protoplasm. While the interest of the student is kept up by the human approach, comparative biology is not neglected. It is introduced where and when needed, however, and is not forced upon the student. The book is beautifully written, clearly presented, and well illustrated. It deserves a thorough trial in the introductory course, and should meet with marked success. Especially valuable are the excellent summarizing chapters such as that on The Web of Life, and the unique appendix, which is full of material which the better student will read avidly.

Two adverse comments may be made. The beginning student, it is feared, will develop a teleological viewpoint from the reading of the book unless the teacher is careful to circumvent it. The references to figures are always placed at the ends of the paragraphs dealing with such material, although the concluding sentence of the paragraph frequently has no bearing on the figure.—*L. H. S.*

Human Biology, by George A. Baitsell. xv+621 pp. New York, the McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1940. \$3.75.

"Adventures"

The experiences of the scientist certainly may be described as adventures, not in the sense of mere thrills but as journeys into the unknown from which he may return with great treasure or seemingly empty handed. In exploring the mysteries of physiology, Haldane has not hesitated to use himself as an experimental animal; breathing carbon dioxide or taking ammonium chloride to test the effects upon the pH of the blood; sitting in a pressure tank in which conditions in a sunken submarine were reproduced in order to be able to give accurate evidence in court. These are but a few of the "adventures" which the author recounts.

The book is composed of a series of essays, lectures and radio addresses upon such topics as: Unsolved Problems of Weather, Earth, Sun, Life, Race, Health; What Is Life?; What Is Death?; Keeping Cool; Darwin; Protoplasm; Human Biology and Politics; Why I Am a Materialist; Religious Liberty; The Marxist Philosophy; etc. These were written at different times, hence there is a decided lack of unity which there is no attempt to disguise. Rather than a defect, this discontinuity is of advantage to the reader, for the book may be picked up and a single chapter read now, another one later, without danger of losing the thread of the narrative.

Haldane summarizes our scientific knowledge in particular fields and unhesitatingly predicts the state of knowledge thirty or fifty years hence. More than this, he does not recoil from stepping into the fields of politics and philosophy to render his opinions.

The chapters dealing with scientific topics are usually packed with interest whereas a departure into politics and Marxian philosophy in the latter chapters of the book tend to "let one down."

The reader may not agree with the writer's course of action in politics nor the philosophy endorsed, but cannot refrain from admiring such a courageous character.—*P. E. Schaefer.*

Adventures of a Biologist, by J. B. S. Haldane. 281 pages. New York, Harper and Brothers. 1940. \$2.75.