Book Reviews and Abstracts

The Family Book. Edited by Gwen St. Aubyn, with an Introduction by Harold Nicolson. Arthur Barker, Ltd. 8/6 net. 1935.

While the daily papers and women's magazines print frequent and regular articles on the upbringing of children, and at the same time numerous excellent text-books on the subject are published, these are usually mainly concerned with the health of the baby and small child. Occasionally, though much more rarely, the subject of the diet and care of adolescents crops up, and it is seldom that we have presented to us expert advice on the suitability of different types of education, having regard to the age, sex, and environment of the child.

All these problems, and many more, dealing with every possible aspect of family life, are discussed fully in "The Family Book," which consists of a series of contributions by several writers, each of whom is an authority in his or her particular subject. It is an admirable method of presenting knowledge to the layman, when it is intended to cover such a wide field, since by this means no one particular period of growth, mental or physical, is stressed to the detriment of others.

To the modern and thoughtful parent the book will be of immense interest, and, what perhaps is of more importance, a practical help. While it is thoroughly up-to-date it avoids the extreme theories which are so often set forth in books on child welfare, and are, therefore, frequently ignored by the average parent who, as Harold Nicolson suggests in a thoughtful and sympathetic introduction, has no wish to experiment on his own child. What strikes one most, after reading the book, is the very balanced, commonsense attitude of the contributors, which will be particularly appreciated by the many ordinary people for whom it is presumably intended.

The first section, "Preparing for Marriage," is, as its title suggests, of an introductory nature. While it has its place in the scheme of the book, and may be of general interest, it did not seem to me to be of great practical value. The succeeding chapter on Birth Control is well set out. It combines two separate contributions by partisans for and against the practice, an arrangement helpful to the reader who is attempting to form an unbiased opinion. To my mind, the result is a balance in favour of birth-control. Michael Fielding, its advocate, wrote with a conviction lacking in his opponent, who left one with the impression that she was forlornly fostering a lost cause.

The third section, "On Having a Baby," is a comprehensive guide for the woman who is expecting her first baby, written by a doctor. His advice regarding her diet and general health is sensibly and clearly given.

"Feeding from Birth to Adolescence" follows, and is divided into three parts: feeding during infancy, the diet of the pre-school child, and the diet of the school child. Although the first part is full of valuable information, I attach almost more importance to the second and third. In these days, when clinics and nursing magazines abound, it is nearly impossible for the modern mother to remain ignorant of the right feeding of infants, and the result can be seen in the large number of healthy-looking infants there are about. Unfortunately it so often happens that by the time the baby outgrows infancy, and is promoted to a mixed diet, its mother's zeal diminishes, or her ignorance begins, and the healthy infant develops into the peevish and puny toddler. The author of this section deals most effectively with the problem and makes, in my opinion, one of the most valuable contributions to the book.

Other writers pay attention to further aspects of the physical life of the child—its clothing, simple ailments, and diseases and deformities, with home nursing and first aid. This concludes the first part of the book, dealing with the health of the child.

Part II discusses its development and education. There is a chapter on sex-education for young children, written with moderation, and another on "Problems of Behaviour," followed by two sections dealing with the development of the child and adolescent. Then come four interesting sections on the education of boys and girls at home and at school. All types of education and their relative merits are discussed in an unbiased manner.

Part III comprises sections on general aspects of family life—the child and its books, the ethics of family life (dealing with religious and moral teaching), and the financial problems of the family, followed by a very full discussion of the careers open to boys and girls. This is a practical and informative section, likely to prove useful to the parents of older children.

The book, which has rightly been described as an Encyclopædia of Parenthood, concludes
with a chapter on the history of child welfare, and describes the valuable work done by the various clinics and welfare centres in existence.

The editor is to be congratulated on having achieved a remarkable correlation between the various sections, which are well illustrated with photographs and diagrams. There is also appended a long and comprehensive list of reference books, useful to the reader who wishes to make a further study of any of the subjects.

E. M. W.

**Constructive Eugenics and Rational Marriage.** By Dr. Morris Siegel. McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., U.S.A. Price

Dr. Siegel defines his eugenic programme as aiming at the elimination of the unfit and the promotion of the qualities of the fit. With these aims few will be found to disagree, but the reader who comes to his book in the hope that it will illuminate the problems which beset any constructive eugenic policy is likely to be disappointed.

It may be reasonably assumed that the progress of eugenic policy within a free democracy will depend firstly upon an unanswerable demonstration of the necessity for eugenic legislation, and secondly upon an adequate biological justification for the specific proposals suggested, and it is clear that the eugenist's case will not be strengthened by exaggerated appeals to the alleged pollution of the racial stock. It is therefore unfortunate that the author ascribes to "most authorities on eugenics" the belief that the increase of feeble-mindedness and insanity is such that within the next seventy-five years about 60 per cent. of the population will be degenerate. It is not surprising that no evidence is given in support of this astonishing statement, and it may be as well to remind the reader that the Brock Report, while noting an apparent increase in the incidence of mental defect, concluded that there was no ground for alarmist views of wholesale racial deterioration.

However, it is probable that the bare facts as they are revealed in current social writings may be regarded as sufficient to convince the majority that there is an appreciable proportion of the race which should be discouraged from reproducing. The real difficulty lies in the fact that our increased knowledge of heredity has actually made it more difficult to frame any policy directed towards this end. For example, a condition due to a dominant gene should be manifested by every individual possessing that gene, and it should therefore be possible to eliminate it in one generation by sterilising all affected individuals. The difficulty here lies in the existence of "imperfect dominants" which may sometimes be carried by normal individuals; polydactyly, about which (according to Dr. Siegel) some doubt exists as to whether it is a dominant or recessive, is probably such a condition. In the case of recessive genes the problem is more difficult, for here the elimination of the condition would always require the sterilisation of carriers as well as of affected individuals, and as in most cases we have no method of differentiating normal individuals into carriers and non-carriers, we are faced with the necessity of sterilising all unaffected close relatives of an affected individual, a drastic policy which could hardly hope to become acceptable. Dr. Siegel's book, though sincerely written, is seriously reduced in value by the elimination of such difficulties. Thus he states that "reliable statistics prove beyond doubt that over 90 per cent. of all people now living do not suffer from any hereditary diseases or taints, nor are they carriers of the same." But it has recently been shown that 0.5 per cent. of the Swedish population carry a recessive gene for juvenile amaurotic idiocy, and it seems probable that we are all carriers of deleterious genes which are, however, unlikely to manifest themselves, except sometimes through a cousin marriage (a point in eugenic policy which is overlooked by the author).

Dr. Siegel places much faith in the spreading of eugenic propaganda through schools, universities, the film and the drama, and he visualises also the establishment of a government bureau for the registering of family pedigrees. "Let us establish specialists in eugenics and we may rest assured that our young people will take advantage of the services that they will offer." It is, of course, of first importance that members of families in which defects have occurred should be aware of the danger of transmitting the defect to their offspring, and should be able to obtain such authoritative information on the matter as may be available, but the treatment of marriage as an aspect of stud-farming is not only genetically impracticable, but is too naive to be taken seriously at the present time.

In the reviewer's opinion the author does not stress sufficiently the importance of the envir-
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It is clear, for instance, that the well-known cases of Max Jukes and Martin Kalikak, which are here quoted yet again, are as much an illustration of the effect of environment as of inheritance. According to recent work by Professor Hogben and others, the effect of the environment in determining differences between individuals is at least as important as that of heredity, and it is now becoming apparent that the concentration of activity upon an all-round improvement and levelling of the environment is not only justified by the soundest biological arguments, but provides the most immediately practicable eugenic policy, and one which will probably eliminate more of the unfit than will any such negative policy as sterilisation.

E.J.W.B.

Twenty-First Annual Report of the General Board of Control for Scotland for the year 1934. H.M. Stationery Office. Price 1/6 net. 1935.

In the twenty-first annual report of the Board of Control for Scotland, special attention is paid to the question of the boarding-out of patients from Institutions for Defectives and from Asylums.

The majority of cases boarded out in Scotland are defectives, and of recent years there has been a tendency to use this form of care mainly for the high grade cases. The Medical Officers and the Public Assistance Officers of the areas undertake the task of selecting suitable guardians and of supervising, guiding and advising them in the best interests of the patients. Tribute is paid to the ungrudging work of these officers who do so much more than carry out their statutory duties; a plea is made for some special form of training for certifying officers.

The type of guardian has changed considerably in the last 20 years, and there is little difficulty now in obtaining guardians who are taking on their duties, not only for the value of work performed by the patient but with a real sense of responsibility and keen interest in the welfare and happiness of their charges. Many are cared for in out-lying farms or crofts, and in some families guardianship has become almost a matter of heredity.

Not much account is taken of the objection of mixing normal children with an adult defective in the same household; in fact it has been found that this often gives the children a sense of responsibility and tolerance.

A number of defectives boarded out in their own homes attend After Schools for instruction in handicrafts. Stress is laid on the necessity for providing such schools or suitable occupation.

Licence has proved very useful, particularly in trying out a patient who has been living for several years under institutional regime and needs a few months' trial before finally settling down with a guardian.

Ascertainment is far from complete, and there are many high grade defectives (who are not sufficiently marked out from the normal child at school) who only come under notice of the Authorities when either destitute or brought before the Courts.

So far the boarding-out of cases of chronic mental illness of a harmless kind has not been much explored, though it is generally agreed that this form of care could be expanded.

Recent Books and Reports

Common Sense Psychology in the Home. By Fredk. H. Dodd, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. Allen and Unwin. Price 5/- net. 1934.

Constructive Eugenics. By Morris Siegel, M.D. McClelland & Stewart (Toronto). Price $2.50. 1935.

The Family Book. Edited by Gwen St. Aubyn. Arthur Barker, Ltd. Price 8/6 net. 1935.

Infant Behaviour: Its Genesis and Growth, By A. Gessell and H. Thompson Price 18/- net. 1935.

The Mental and Physical Life of School Children. By Peter Sandiford. Longmans. Price 6/- net. 1935.

An Introduction to Individual Psychology, By Dr. R. Dreyfus. Routledge. Price 3/6 net. 1935.

Twentieth Annual Report of the General Board of Control for Scotland. H.M. Stationery Office. Price 1/6 net. 1935.

*Reviewed in this issue.

List of Additions to the Library.

For insertion on the interleaved pages of the Catalogue

Fox, C. English Prisons To-day. 1934.