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BOOK REVIEWS

Folklore and Odysseys of Food and Medicinal Plants. Ernst and Johanna Lehner. 128 pp. illus. Tudor Publishing Co., New York, 1960. \$4.95.

With the ever increasing number of courses in economic botany in preparatory schools and colleges, such a book should be indeed welcome. And for the interested layman, to say nothing about the lovers of books on exotic topics, this volume has had few equals in the past quarter century.

The stories of most of our important economic plants—as well as some of the rare ones—are told in a straightforward and fascinating style. The treatment has all the earmarks of deep research into historical and botanical records and would seem to have been calculatingly planned for these busy days when man has so little time for casual and leisurely reading. Yet, withal, it is refreshingly complete and inspires confidence both as to coverage and accuracy. Hundreds of curious facts little known even to the specialist are hidden away in these pages.

The book is organized into the following sections: "Introduction"; "Cereals"; "Stimulants"; "Odysseys of Plants"; "Physic Garden"; "Culinary Herbs": [Index of] "Illustrations"; and "Index." Perhaps more space could have been given over to the cereals in view of their prime importance as the source of the greater part of mankind's sustenance, but the authors probably felt that to do so would have necessitated the omission of some of the interesting discussions of lesser known plants under other categories, such as the betel nut, breadfruit tree, pomegranate, garlic, ginseng, nettle, sassafras, anise, cherry kernels, borage, elecampane, woodruff, and others.

The illustrations are superbly chosen from an extraordinary diversity of old and classical books and publications. The frontispiece is a reproduction of the title page from John Parkinson's *Paradise in Sole* (1629). Almost all of the plants discussed are illustrated with

one or more quaint drawings from old masters in botany, and, for a large number of the plants considered, there are additional ancient drawings representing social customs, medical or culinary practice, or curious beliefs about the species in question. The person who has a library limited in the botanical classics and herbals would do well to buy *Folklore and Odysseys of Food and Medicinal Plants* if only for the wealth of illustrative material of a historical nature.

As a teacher of economic botany, I expect to utilize this book as a supplement to the large amount of technical and ponderous reading which I must expect my students to master. And I am certain that others who peruse its pages will likewise feel, as I do, that here is a wealth of fundamentally important information presented in a most pleasing and readable style and in a most artistic setting.

Historians usually treat the history of mankind in terms of wars, politics, religion, and social or industrial revolution. Few there are who realize that much of the history of our human race could be written in terms of economic plants. The Lehnners have, in this one volume, gone a long way towards emphasizing the tremendous impact that economic plants have had upon the development and history of man and upon his social evolution.

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American Wildlife and Plants. Alexander C. Martin, Herbert S. Zim, and Arnold L. Nelson. 500 pp. illus. Unabridged republication of the 1st (1951) edition. Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1961. \$2.00.

Manual of the Trees of North America. Charles Sprague Sargent. 2 vols. 910 pp. illus. Unabridged republication of the 2nd (1922) edition. Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1961. \$2.00 (each volume).