INTELLIGENT PLANTS

THE HUMAN SIDE OF PLANTS. By Royal Dixon. Frederick Stokes Company. $1.50.

In "The Human Side of Plants" Mr. Dixon makes us free of a new and fascinating world. Nature books have multiplied so rapidly in the past decade, and many of them devoid of scientific background, that it is reassuring to find Mr. Dixon, who is a trained botanist with several years' professional connection with museums, reinforcing his every statement with the scientific fact. When, therefore, one steps across this borderland of wonder and finds his plant neighbors busy at tasks accredited only to humankind, he knows, despite appearances, that he is still in a world of reality.

That plants display a marvelous adaptability to conditions of growth, that they possess initiative to change undesirable conditions and have perfected methods of perpetuation so ingenious as to challenge amazement—all this is common knowledge. But Mr. Dixon goes more deeply into the life of the plant and sets himself to prove that this adaptability, or ingenuity, usually regarded as instinct on the part of the plant, is really a highly evolved intelligence. Maerlincck and others have advanced this as a speculative theory, but in "The Human Side of Plants" hypothesis gives way to demonstration, the plant enacts its drama before one's eyes, and the value of the book is in the definite illustration of each characteristic of the plant world by the types that manifest it.

Mr. Dixon's method of developing his subject makes it possible to use a wealth of material. Instead of taking one plant and studying its habits, he makes the habit the unit of demonstration, and groups about it profuse examples of plants which illustrate the point in consideration. This gives to the book a wide range from the botanical standpoint, and makes it valuable for schools, but the manner of presentation is so far from the academic that the book will appeal even more widely to the general reader. The style is full of charm, and one finds himself following with absorbed interest the ingenious wiles of plants that mimic, that defend themselves, that keep a standing army, that send out aerial fleets, that walk, sleep, foretell the weather, kidnap, and even rob and murder. In the last group the dodder, the mistletoe, the orchid, the Indian pipe, and the Murderer Llana are sketched in little stories as fascinating as fiction.

"The Human Side of Plants" is not only delightful reading, but a book to give the reader new sympathy and vision.  JESSIE B. RITTMENHOUSE.