

First Glances at New Books

THE ESCAPE FROM THE PRIMITIVE—Horace Carncross—*Scribner's*. (\$2.50). Highly speculative and occasionally questionable discussions of the world at large and human beings in particular by a psychoanalyst.

Science News-Letter, December 25, 1926.

FROM MYTH TO REASON—Woodbridge Riley—*Appleton*. (\$2.50). Few men would have been so competent to tell the story of the growth of the scientific method for the six thousand years of history, and, of that few, much fewer would be able or willing to tell it so simply and clearly. Without pedantry or parade of learning, without heat or intolerance, he describes the early gropings after truth in Egyptian and Babylonian legend, the rise of rationalism in Greece, the long eclipse of the Dark Ages, the struggles of astronomy to free itself from the shackles of astrology, the materialism of the eighteenth century, and the evolution of evolution. The narrative is enlivened by bits of biography and curiosities of thought. It is more than a history, for Professor Riley has taken pains to state the opposing arguments in the historic conflicts of thought. For these reasons it is particularly adapted as a beginner's book whether the beginner be young or old.

Science News-Letter, December 25, 1926

THEORY OF VIBRATING SYSTEMS AND SOUND—Irving B. Crandall—*Van Nostrand* (\$5). An advanced technical treatment by a Bell Telephone Laboratories expert. The data given are fundamental to the telephone, radio, auditoriums, phonographs, loud-speakers, and anything else that has to do with speech, music or other sound.

Science News-Letter, December 25, 1926.

PLANKTON OF THE OFFSHORE WATERS OF THE GULF OF MAINE—Henry B. Bigelow—*U. S. Department of Commerce: Bureau of Fisheries Document No. 968*. An exhaustive quantitative technical study, of value to the Atlantic fisheries industries.

Science News-Letter, December 25, 1926.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG WORKERS—Owen D. Evans—*Macmillan* (\$3). The first of the studies of methods of adult education sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It tells what opportunities for future education there are or should be for the great army of grammar school graduates.

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ENTOMOLOGY

The Way of a Butterfly

Quotation from *HOW INSECTS LIVE*. W. H. Wellhouse. Macmillan.

The commonest butterfly seen in most parts of the country is a white one which flies over the fields and gardens, usually not higher than our heads. It flies apparently aimlessly, stopping frequently for a moment to rest on some low plant, then going in a new direction. In all probability its flight is not so aimless as it seems and it is seeking plants belonging to the *Cruciferae* family such as cabbage, rape, turnip, mustard, nasturtium, cauliflower, horse-radish, radish, kale, etc. It is upon the leaves of these plants that the larvæ live, so the butterfly must place the eggs there. How she can distinguish the plants of this family we do not know, but if a bit of the oil extracted from mustard plants be placed on other plants it will attract her, so it seems probable that a keen sense of smell guides her to the proper plants. She spends much time in locating places for her young to live. She is not content to deposit her eggs in large groups all in one place as many butterflies do, but instead she deposits a single egg in each place and thus her young may occur in 200 or more different locations. An enemy must therefore look far and wide to find them, and some of them will surely survive.

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GEOLOGY

Niagara's Suicide

Quotation from *WHAT PRICE PROGRESS?* By Hugh Farrell. New York: Putnam's. \$2.50.

If you are one of those who prefer the roar of tumbling waters, wasting themselves away to the sea, to the roar of wheels, turning in the service of man, it may interest you to know that Niagara Falls, as Mr. Harper once said, is committing suicide. Yes, that's what it is doing. Inch by inch, foot by foot, mile by mile, Horse Shoe Falls on the Canadian side is cutting back into the escarpment and little by little destroying the beauty of that once most gorgeous spectacle. I said little by little, but it is not little by little—the self-destroying erosion which Horse Shoe Falls is carrying on is proceeding at the rate of more than 6 feet a year. The symmetry of the toe of the shoe has already been destroyed, and the concentration of flow that increases with every inch of erosion is rapidly cutting a wide gash straight back. This gash is drawing the water away from the two sides of the heel of the falls, leaving them bare and ugly.

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GEOGRAPHY

Homeric Cosmogony

Quotation from *A STUDY OF THE OCEANS*. James Johastone. Longmans, Green. (\$3.75)

Thales of Miletus (about 600 B. C.) gives us a conception of the world which is entirely different from that of Homer and Hesiod. The earth itself is now a sphere unsupported in space. That it was a sphere Thales deduced from the appearance of the earth's shadow seen on the moon during eclipses. He is said even to have predicted the occurrence of eclipses, using the true theory. He made the Zodiac, or path of the sun through the star-constellations, and he made a celestial meridian at right angles to the Zodiac. This advance in nature-knowledge, beyond the shadowy, legendary references which we find in Homer and Hesiod, is so enormous that we simply must refer the cosmogony of the poets to materials of a much earlier period than only three centuries before Thales.

It is remarkable that the geography of the seventh to the third centuries of the pre-Christian era is as different as it can be from that of the Iliad and the Odyssey. The date of composition of these great poems is usually taken to be about 1000 B.C., but so enormous an advance in natural knowledge is apparent in the speculations of the seventh century that we must conclude that the Homeric cosmogony is really that of a much earlier date than the tenth century B.C.

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A Star Map

All of heaven in my hands—
With one finger I can turn
Till I sink Orion's bands,
And the Lyre begins to burn.

I can make a night of spring,
Shivering Spica, white Altair,
And above me I can swing
Slowly Berenice's Hair.

Winter evening, autumn dawn
Man has charted; I can see
How Midsummer Night moves on
Tranquilly and terribly;

Light lost in light, death lost in death,
Time without end, Space without bound—

I, whose life is but a breath,
Turn Infinity around.

—Sara Teasdale in *The Bookman*.

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A three wheel auto recently won a six-day motor race in Scotland.