

First Glances at New Books

STARS AND ATOMS—Arthur Stanley Eddington—*Yale Univ.* (\$2). Probably there is no living astronomer who speaks with as much authority on what's inside a star and how the atoms that make it up differ from those we know on the earth, as Professor Eddington, of Cambridge University. Within the last year has appeared his book, "The Internal Constitution of the Stars"—perhaps the last word on the subject. But that work is rather technical for the lay reader, though it contains brilliantly arresting passages that anyone would do well to consider. In "Stars and Atoms" he has told the same story, but told it for the general reader with all the facile style and unexpected wit that is peculiarly his. In short, it is a book to be heartily recommended to any intelligent man or woman.

Science News-Letter, July 9, 1927

THE STORY OF MATHEMATICS—Denham Larrett—*Greenberg* (\$1.25). From the surveying of the Egyptians and the geometry of the Greeks the author describes how these were blended with the algebra of the Arabs to produce modern mathematical science—all in 88 pages!

Science News-Letter, July 9, 1927

THE FOUNDERS OF SEISMOLOGY—Charles Davison—*Macmillan* (\$4.25). An admirable summary (in 240 pages) of the history of the study of earthquakes and the men who founded the science. Though, as might be expected, special attention is paid to the British seismologists, the work of other countries is well treated and a chapter is devoted to the study of earthquakes in the United States.

Science News-Letter, July 9, 1927

PHYSICS—M. H. Kessel—*Globe*. An outline of physics such as would be useful for reference or cramming for an examination.

Science News-Letter, July 9, 1927

THE SPRINGS OF HUMAN ACTION—Mehran K. Thomson—*Appleton* (\$3). Puzzling out the motives that lie back of human conduct is one of the commonest mental problems that we set ourselves. This comprehensive discussion makes it easier to understand why the probing of motives is so often difficult.

Science News-Letter, July 9, 1927

A new kind of moving sidewalk is being tried out in Paris.

THE EVOLUTION OF CHARLES DARWIN—George A. Dorsey—*Doubleday*, Page (\$2). Again the author of "Why We Behave Like Human Beings" has achieved the unusual—this time a biography written in light, vivid narrative, interrupted by those typical Dorseyan touches of biology, psychology and anthropology, showing why and how Darwin developed into the man he was. The Darwin painted here stands out, not only as a many-sided genius but as one of Dr. Dorsey's "human beings."

Science News-Letter, July 9, 1927

HANDBOOK OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SOCIETIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA—BULLETIN 58 OF THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL, American Section, compiled by Clarence J. West and Callie Hull; Canadian Section, compiled by National Research Council, Canada—*National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D. C.* (\$3). A ready guide to those societies, associations and institutions of the United States and Canada which contribute to knowledge or further research through their activities, publications or funds. Over three hundred pages, the list is not to be regarded as a selective one. Organizations directly controlled by universities have been omitted because of the forthcoming publication "American Universities and Colleges" to be issued by the American Council on Education.

Science News-Letter, July 9, 1927

YEARBOOK OF AGRICULTURE, 1926—U. S. Department of Agriculture—*Government Printing Office* (\$1.50). This is a 1300-page encyclopedia, the latest in Uncle Sam's annual editions of the word's most widely circulated agricultural book. Over 200 articles and nearly thrice as many tables give an adequate survey of agriculture today.

Science News-Letter, July 9, 1927

INVENTIONS AND PATENTS—Milton Wright—*McGraw-Hill*. For those with that universal American urge to patent, trade-mark and exploit their bright ideas, this book, by the associate editor of the *Scientific American*, is an invaluable guide and help.

Science News-Letter, July 9, 1927

BRIEF BIOLOGY—Charles Gramet—*Globe Book Co.* A large territory of science is covered here by a compact little handbook. The specimen examinations added to the text should be useful to teachers and students.

Science News-Letter, July 9, 1927

Advice from Darwin

Quotation from "The Evolution of Charles Darwin"—George A. Dorsey—Doubleday, Page.

On two different occasions Darwin ventured, "as an old hackneyed author," to offer advice to young naturalists who were presumptive authors. I do not find this advice in books devoted to the technique of writing, but it is first-class advice and as sound and as applicable today as when written, seventy-five years ago.

He had found it a good plan, he wrote, when he could not get a difficult discussion in pleasing form, to fancy some one coming into the room and asking him what he was doing; and then to try to explain to the imaginary person what it was all about; he sometimes tried this plan on Mrs. Darwin. He also found it good to read his manuscript aloud. Then he added this bit of advice: "Strike out every word which is not quite necessary to the current subject and which could not interest a stranger. I constantly asked myself, would a stranger care for this? and struck out or left in accordingly. I think too much pains cannot be taken in making the style transparently clear and throwing eloquence to the dogs."

He wrote the young gardener, who went to India, that a paper he had submitted to him would have been better if written more simply and less elaborated—"more like your letters. It is a golden rule always to use, if possible, a short old Saxon word. Such a sentence as 'so purely dependent is the incipient plant on the specific morphological tendency' does not sound to my ears like good mother-English—it wants translating. . . . I can go on the plan of thinking every single word which can be omitted without actual loss of sense as a decided gain." Nor is he to despair about his style, he tells the gardener, although it is a little too ambitious. As for himself, he never studies style—he merely tries to get the subject as clearly as he can in his own head and then express it in the commonest language he can find. Even with the best of English writers, writing is slow work!

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A jar containing wheat grains has been found in Kish, in Mesopotamia, showing that wheat was used in bread making about 3500 B. C.

An automatic device to receive and record telephone messages when no one answers the phone has been produced by two Swedish inventors.