

First Glances at New Books

THE ROMANCE OF THE RIVERS—John T. Faris—*Harper* (\$6). In the wide expanses of our country we have been provided with an unusually large number of rivers, from the Connecticut to the Colorado; from the James to the Columbia. All have their fascinating histories, such as the tales of the early settlers along the Hudson and of the pioneers who first explored the rivers of the west. Mr. Faris has gathered these together in one volume which is well worth reading. The profuse illustrations help hold the reader's interest.

Science News-Letter, February 4, 1928

THE EVOLUTION OF SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT FROM NEWTON TO EINSTEIN—A. D'Abro—*Boni and Live-right*. An exhaustive discussion of the theory of relativity and related concepts, and the development which has led to them, but the lack of an index in a book of this sort is really inexcusable.

Science News-Letter, February 4, 1928

THE MECHANISM OF HOMOGENEOUS ORGANIC REACTIONS FROM THE PHYSICAL-CHEMICAL STANDPOINT—Francis Owen Rice—*Chemical Catalog* (\$5). The latest volume in the American Chemical Society's series of monographs.

Science News-Letter, February 4, 1928

INTENSIFICATION AND REDUCTION—E. J. Wall—*American Photographic Publishing Co.* (\$1). Even the best of photographers sometimes over-expose, or under-develop; and hence the need for such a book as this. Mr. Wall gives a résumé of old and new methods of reduction and intensification. His complete bibliography gives all the information needed by one who might wish to pursue the subject further.

Science News-Letter, February 4, 1928

THE EARTH AND ITS HISTORY—John Hodgdon Bradley—*Ginn* (\$3). Intended for elementary college courses, this new geology text covers the present state, as well as the evolution, of the earth. A chapter on "Geology in the Service of Man" will answer the student's question "What's the good of this?"

Science News-Letter, February 4, 1928

A TEXTBOOK OF BACTERIOLOGY AND ITS APPLICATIONS—Curtis M. Hilliard—*Ginn* (\$2.80). A compact text designed for beginning students in a general course.

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TIMBUCTOO—Leland Hall—*Harper* (\$4). A map inside the front cover shows just where Timbuctoo is, the author's first chapter tells how he finally succeeded in getting there, with difficulties. And in the rest, he tells his fascinating story of what he found there.

Science News-Letter, February 4, 1928

ANIMAL MIND—Frances Pitt—*Stokes*. An interesting but rather bulky and not very well written collection of notes of the author's observations of animal mentality.

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ANTHROPOLOGY A Theory of Woman's Sphere

THE MOTHERS by Robert Briffault. 3 vols. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1927. \$9.00.

"The Mothers" is a work of amazing erudition and range of research. There is nothing to compare with it in the field of anthropology unless it be "The Golden Bough" which Frazer began as a magazine article but found the subject expand as he studied it until he filled twelve big volumes. Mr. Briffault has written three volumes of 800 pages each and if he does not convince all his opponents he is likely to overwhelm them with the avalanche of evidence he has amassed. All anthropologists seem to be able to fish up any kind of cases they need to prove their theories from the same travelers' tales, but Mr. Briffault finds more than anybody else. On some pages there are only three lines of text at the top of the page, supported by a foundation of 47 lines of fine print giving citations from the sources in defense of his thesis.

Whether he has proved his points is a question that will have to be settled by the sociologists and it will doubtless take them years to come to a conclusion on his deductions, but there can be no question of the value of the work as a cyclopedia and bibliography of information on primitive and ancient life. It is only the serious student who will go through the book for it is naturally hard and unpleasant reading on account of its bulk, repetitions and repulsive details. It reminds one of the report submitted by the British Consul stationed in the Congo, who, when he came to the blank in his official form headed: "Manners and customs," filled it out conscientiously and correctly: "Manners, none; customs, nasty."

The author presents many iconoclastic views on the origin of society that run counter to current opinions. He contradicts Westermarck's theory that monogamous marriage was common among primitive peoples, also the theory of McLennan and Lubbock as to the meaning of marriage by capture. He holds that the moon was superior and prior to the sun as an object of early adoration because the moon was the woman's god. He believes that in the primitive period woman was the dominant sex, the suitor in courtship, the sovereign of the home, the manager of industries and the leader in religious rites. A few paragraphs will give most clearly and correctly his theory of the course of history.

"So long as the men possessed no fundable wealth, marriage has tended to remain matri-local and the social order to retain consequently a matriarchal character, except where male dominance was established by brute force in savage societies which have shown themselves incapable of further development. Definite economic power was first placed in the hands of men by the domestication of animals, which are always regarded as appertaining to the province of the hunter, and by the development of pastoral societies. That power has commonly been used to buy off the claims of women and of their families to the allegiance and services of husbands; women are purchased for cattle, and patriarchal society with patrilocal marriage becomes inevitably established among pastoral peoples."

"The regular and assured agricultural food-supply released the men; the cornfield abolished the economic importance of the hunter. The primitive economic function of the male came to an end. He was set free for other avocations. He had yoked his oxen to the plough; he had by degrees taken over the bulk of agricultural labour. The industries which had hitherto been almost exclusively in women's hands, passed into those of the men. The household crafts which had originated with the household work, pottery, woodwork, rude building, weaving, became masculine industries."

"The sexual division of labor upon which social development had been founded in primitive societies was abolished. Woman, instead of being the chief producer, became economically unproductive, destitute and dependent."

—E. E. Slosson.

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