

On the Choice of a Common Language

Edited by H. Jacob. Pp. xiv+130. (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1946.) 7s. 6d. net.

ANYONE who has listened patiently to radio accounts of proceedings at the Peace Conference must have fresh in his mind the prodigious expenditure of time, and sometimes the shocking confusions and misunderstandings, caused by what one of the contributors to this book calls "these linguistic difficulties which have cursed mankind since Babel". Here is sufficient proof that something needs to be done about it.

The aim of this book is to show that a common language is not only an urgent need, but also a practical possibility. It is produced under the auspices of the New Education Fellowship, an organisation which is too well known to call for description or commendation in any educational journal. In the first part the writer gives a short history of the constructed languages, such as Volapuk and Esperanto. The second part is devoted to an exposition of Basic English, its meaning, its principles, and its educational value. The book as a whole comes down definitely on the side of Basic English as the simplest and most promising way of meeting the need of the peoples of the world for international communication, now that the nations are inevitably drawn closer together. The book is packed with reliable information, and is a credit to its writers.

The Statesman's Year-Book

Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1946. Edited by Dr. M. Epstein. Eighty-third annual publication, revised after Official Returns. Pp. xiv+1,461. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1946.) 30s. net.

THIS valuable year-book again provides the official statistics for every country of the world. For some of the belligerent States of Europe revised figures are at last available. For the main enemy countries, however, that is not yet possible. The frontier changes in eastern Europe contemplated at the Berlin Conference of July 1945 are shown in a coloured map—the allocation of the Polish corridor, East Prussia, Bessarabia and Bukovina, with the western spread of the U.S.S.R. A second map shows the changes indicated by the Potsdam proclamation to Japan, including the return of Manchuria and Formosa to China, of Karafuto and the Kurile Islands to the U.S.S.R. and the independence of Korea. The section on the League of Nations is replaced by one on the United Nations with the complete text of the Charter. The British Council is also noticed. The volume retains unchanged its compact shape and size and high standard of production.

Self

A Study in Ethics and Endocrinology. By Michael Dillon. Pp. vi+128. (London: William Heinemann (Medical Books) Ltd., 1946.) 6s. net.

THE ancient precept, inscribed in gold letters over the portico of the Temple at Delphi, is rendered into English as "Know Thyself". This precept is adopted as a motto by the author of "Self: a Study in Ethics and Endocrinology". Mr. M. Dillon is the author of the book, and Dr. Gilbert Russell writes a commendatory but cautious foreword. The author sets himself the question: Why is a man what he is? The beliefs, tastes, hobbies, eccentricities, which build up the normal man or

woman, are the origin of the disorders which develop if any trait gets out of perspective. This book is an attempt to discover how far the character of the individual depends (the words are important) upon physical structure and the chemistry of the body. The author examines the difference of outlook between the two sexes, how this difference arises and what it implies. In discussing, in the second part of the book, the mind, he necessarily deals with the problem of free-will, and this brings him to a synthesis of science and philosophy as a guide to man's understanding of himself.

All things considered, the book is simply written, but for the less initiated the author thoughtfully adds an explanatory vocabulary. He concludes with a bibliography and a reference to papers on the subject.

The Photography of Scenery

By Dr. Vaughan Cornish. Pp. 129. (London: Sifton Praed and Co., Ltd., 1946.) 12s. 6d. net.

DR. VAUGHAN CORNISH has not infrequently charmed us with his studies of beautiful things, sometimes natural and sometimes man-made. Now he provides another collection, from his camera this time, with a promise of some sketches to follow.

Apart from the technically high level which is achieved, the appeal of these photographs resides to a considerable extent in the sense of tranquillity which many of them produce. That is very valuable in these days of riotous movement. For example, No. 22 (banyan tree) is almost a Blake drawing in essence, rhythmic yet reposeful. The architectural studies, Wells for example, are very successful in their own way and manage to convey characteristic local atmosphere. When all this is presented in an attractive little book, one goes on one's way rejoicing that there is still somebody who values scenery intensely and wants other people to do so too.

F. IAN G. RAWLINS

Karlova Universita

(The Charles University). By Prof. V. Vojtíšek. Pp. xii+130. (Brno: A. Piša, 1946.) 84 crowns.

PROF. VOJTÍŠEK is archivist to the city of Prague, and his object is to emphasize the Czech origin of the city's University. This he does by reproducing and explaining the early documents relating to its foundation. These are Pope Clement's Bull of 1347, Charles IV's "Golden Bull" of 1348 and his endowment charter of 1349. The 1401 and 1402 reports of the then dean (Magister John Hus) are given together with the legal observations of 1414 on Wenceslas IV's 'Kutná Hora' decree reiterating the precedence of the Bohemian 'nation' in all university affairs. The need to establish the facts relating to the origin of the University has arisen as a consequence of the German action during the occupation of transferring the privileges and possessions of the University to the German University of Prague.

Rostlina pod Dvojnöhledem

(The Plant Under the Microscope). By Prof. S. Prát. Pp. 206. (Prague: Česká Grafická Unie, 1945.) 99 crowns.

THIS is a new text-book of structural botany for Czechoslovak university students. It is noteworthy for the excellence of the author's photographs of microscope preparations.