The Cult of the Superman

A Study of the Idea of Heroism in Carlyle and Nietzsche, with Notes on other Hero-Worshippers of Modern Times. By Eric Bentley. Pp. xxiii + 277. (London: Robert Hale, Ltd., 1947.) 12*s*. 6*d*. net.

THIS is a discussion of the cult of the hero considered as the shaper of human destinies; a cult started by Carlyle, developed by Nietzsche and continued by Wagner, Bernard Shaw, Spengler, Stefan George and D. H. Lawrence. The last three, though Mr. Bentley does his best to polish them up, are just dim. Shaw, who is anything but dim, is only a hero-worshipper spasmodically in his Wagnerite moods. Wagner had great influence in his day, but still is only a lightweight. Were even the first two heavyweights? Mr. Bentley thinks they were or he would not have written this witty and provocative book. They have been labelled proto-fascists; but the label, even if it is appropriate, does not make their ideas negligible. Fascism takes account of elements in human nature which liberals and rationalists have refused to see. Carlyle and Nietzsche did see that mass-production of machines and the mechanization of the human masses was not the road to any paradise, capitalist or proletarian. They did foretell more about the twentieth century than any of their contemporaries. Marx and Engels unaccountably omitted to predict Lenin and Stalin; Carlyle and Nietzsche made a very good shot at them (not to mention Hitler, Mussolini and others). But, as Mr. Bentley shows, the doctrine of the hero has always been confused and inconsistent, and always been propounded by those whose attitude to life is ambivalent. Mr. Bentley himself is ambivalent towards his subject. He thinks that this sound and fury signified something but finds it difficult to explain what. He concludes with the mild observation that democracy needs leaders, an aristocracy of talent; a conclusion that would infuriate Carlyle or Nietzsche, who did not admire the characteristic democratic leader of the American or British pattern.

A. D. R.

Précis de dermatologie

Par J. Darier, A. Civatte et A. Tzanck. Cinquième édition par A. Civatte. Pp. v + 1,152. (Paris: Masson et Cie., 1947.) 1,700 francs.

THE appearance of a fifth edition of Darier's "Précis de Dermatologie" is an event of importance. The last edition appeared in 1928 and has long been exhausted. This book has become in France, where dermatology is an art less confined to the specialist than it is in Britain, part of the library of nearly every student.

The title is misleading, as the scope is more nearly that of a text-book than a précis. It is intended as a guide to diagnosis for the practitioner and as an introduction to dermatology for the student. General principles of treatment are indicated, but detail is omitted.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first classifies the skin diseases according to morphological appearances; the second part deals specifically with diseases grouped according to causal agents.

This is a complete guide to dermatology without omission of the rarities, and it is a book which no specialist need disdain.

The new edition has been edited and brought up to date by Dr. Civatte since the death of Darier. He is to be congratulated on his work, which includes all the recent advances in the subject in diagnostic measures, treatment methods, etc. This has been achieved without altering the fundamental design set by Darier. Many good new illustrations have been added.

I do not hesitate to say that this work has no equal in the English language, and that the new edition will consolidate its high reputation in the exacting school of French dermatology.

JAMES MARSHALL

The Theory of Functions of Real Variables

By Prof. Lawrence M. Graves. Pp. x + 300. (New York and London: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1946.) 20*s*.

THE exposition of a mathematical subject in its early stages of development is apt to require a bulky volume; the appearance of this concise treatise, covering so much ground, would consequently suggest that the theory of functions of real variables is now coming to maturity. Conciseness is partly achieved by the extensive use, especially in the earlier part of the book, of the symbolism of mathematical logic. In order to accustom the reader to the use of this symbolic method, many statements in the earlier chapters are given in duplicate, first in symbols and then in ordinary language.

The subjects covered in three hundred pages include the following: the real number system, sets of points, limits, the Riemann integral, uniform convergence, implicit functions, the Lebesgue integral and the Stieltjes integral. The exposition is careful and thorough, but so condensed that the beginner would find its perusal far from easy without the assistance of lectures or of a tutor: indeed, the author suggests as much in his preface.

It seems strange that, in his limit notation, the author makes use of the obsolete sign of equality, and not of the arrow-head as introduced by Leathem and Bromwich.

T. M. M.

Physical Chemistry for Colleges

A Course of Instruction based upon the Fundamental Laws of Chemistry. By Prof. E. B. Millard. (International Chemical Series.) Sixth edition. Pp. ix + 682. (New York and London: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1946.) 22*s*. 6*d*.

Fundamental Principles of Physical Chemistry

By Prof. Carl F. Prutton and Assoc. Prof. Samuel H. Maron. Pp. x + 780. (New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1944.) 25*s*. net.

THESE two books are excellent examples of modern American texts on physical chemistry. The continued usefulness of the former is attested by the five previous editions, while the latter is a new work. Both make a thermodynamic approach to the subject and cover a considerable amount of ground. Although stated to be for beginners and designed for a single year's work, they do not confine themselves to the elements of the subject (which are covered very agreeably); they take in their stride such complex affairs as the Debye–Hückel theory, activity coefficients, the third law of thermodynamics, rotational spectra, modern formulations of reaction kinetics, etc. Remembering his own experience as a teacher, it is something of a mystery to the writer how the American student of chemistry and chemical engineering manages to digest all this in so short a time. Both books are well provided with problems.

J. A. V. BUTLER